

*The Education and Public Libraries Committee
calls the attention of readers to the necessity for
taking proper care of this book in order to obviate the
need for its frequent replacement by clean copies.*

Readers are notified that this book is
examined before issue for perfect condition, and
is examined again on return, a charge being then
made for any damage.

Saint Pancras Public Libraries.

TEMPORARY W. KENTISH BRANCH LIBRARY

43, MALDEN RD., N.W.5. TEL. GULLIVER 4651.

The Lending Library is open from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. every week day, except Wednesday, when it closes at 1 p.m.

The time allowed for reading each work issued, whether one volume or more, is fourteen days. For any book not returned within that period, a fine of one penny for the first week or portion of a week, and two-pence for each succeeding week or portion of a week, is charged.

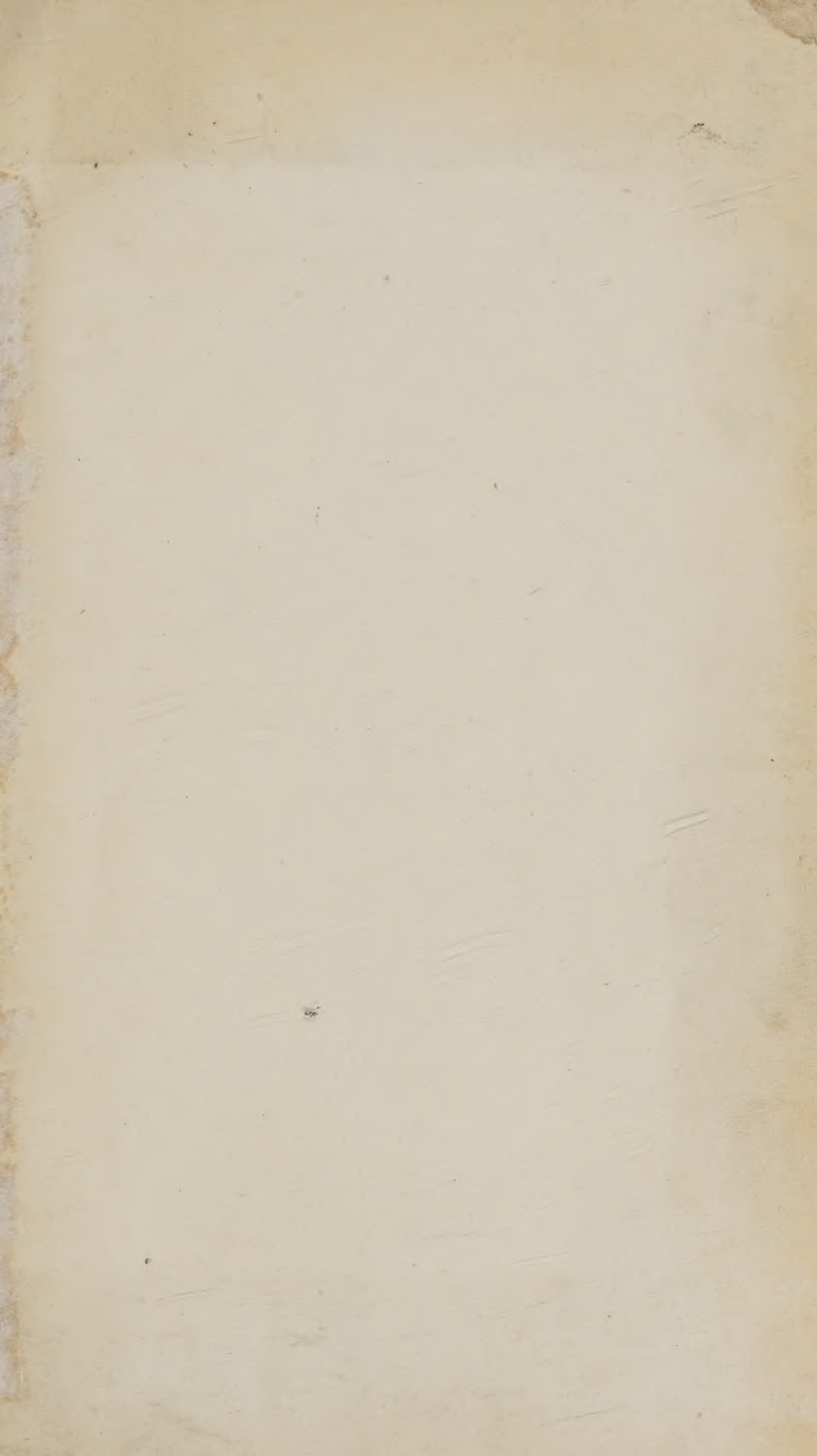
In cases of infectious disease, books must NOT be returned to the Library, but must be delivered either to the Sanitary Authorities at the time of their call, or to the Disinfecting Station, Camley Street, St. Pancras Way, N.W.1—open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. until 12 noon Saturday.

No book can be issued unless the reader's ticket is presented or a book returned. No book can be exchanged on the day on which it was issued.

Changes of address of readers or of their guarantors must be notified within one week of such change.

Readers leaving the Borough or ceasing to use the Library are required to return their tickets to the Librarian, otherwise they and their guarantors will be responsible for all liabilities incurred.

Readers are required to keep the books clean, to refrain from turning down the leaves, or making pencil or other marks upon them. They must take the earliest opportunity of reporting any damage or injury done to the books they receive, otherwise they will be held accountable for the same. In wet weather they must protect the books in their transit to and from the Libraries.





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

BROTHER SCOTS

Recent Publications

SOME PEOPLE
by Harold Nicolson

OSCAR BROWNING
by H. K. Wortham

EMILY DAVIES
AND GIRTON COLLEGE
by Lady Stephen

A STUDY
OF BRITISH GENIUS
by Havelock Ellis

THE
LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE
by Sir Francis Younghusband

941.08292

BROTHER SCOTS

BY

DONALD CARSWELL

CANCELLED
— WITHDRAWN —

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD
1927

245

TO KATE

941
081

CLASS 941 081	ACCESSION A 16172	STAMP GB
LABEL GB.	BOOK CARD	BINDING
STOCKCARD ✓	REF CARD RL.	CHECKED ✓
SHEAF AUTH. ✓	SHEAF TITLE ✓	DATE ISSUED Jan. 28 / 28

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH

MSC
V039
Bat

P R E F A C E

THE biographical studies that make up this book are ostensibly separate essays, each complete in itself. But they were not separately conceived. My idea in writing them was to give not only some account of a number of intrinsically interesting men but also a cultural picture of Scotland in the late years of the nineteenth century. The picture is neither complete nor, even in regard to the aspects of Scottish life with which it deals, very explicit, but it contains matter which I believe will be found interesting, especially by English readers.

The Scottish character is familiar enough and it adapts itself readily enough to English ways and institutions. Yet it is never quite assimilated. There remains always something unresolved, something alien, even hostile to the English genius. The Englishman feels it, but is at a loss to say what it is. The Scotsman cannot help him to define it, for he himself has never thought the matter out. He merely repeats a few patriotic *cliches*, and like most patriots he has not even an elementary knowledge of the history of his own country.

There are two fundamental facts to be noted about Scotland. The first is racial. The Scots are a mixed race, made up of the same elements as the English, but in different proportions, the Anglo-Saxon element being much smaller. The fair-haired Germanic type common in England is rare in Scotland, except anomalously in the North Highlands, where it is of Norse origin. The dark pre-Celtic race is widely diffused though it is found in its purity only in the West Highlands. In the Lowlands this mixture of races has produced a people of exceptionally robust and acute intelligence and strong, even coarse, passions. In general, though extremely shrewd, they lack insight, and as compared with the English they may be described as more fantastic but less imaginative.

The other fact is historical. England, ever since it has been England, has been a relatively rich and populous country, and for more than eight centuries has enjoyed a settled government under a strong and vital central power. The people accept the rule of law as they accept the air they breathe. They are seasoned in civilisation. The case of Scotland is very different. During the greater part of their history the Scottish nation were like the conies, a feeble folk who made their houses in the rocks. Throughout the Middle Ages, and for long afterwards, their condition was one of direst misery. The English villein, wretched as he was, lived better

P R E F A C E

than the Scottish freeman. The poverty was not altogether due to the barrenness of the soil, for Scotland, as Cromwell noted when he marched through the Lothians, has some of the finest agricultural land in Great Britain. Cromwell further noticed, with surprise and indignation, that this exceeding good land was occupied by an idle, ignorant and degraded peasantry who were literally starving in the midst of plenty. Yet these poor people were not to blame. Their misery was due to the political situation of their country. The Lowlands were at the mercy of a lawless and greedy feudalism which treated the Crown with contempt. They were menaced from the south by their rich and powerful neighbours of England, and from the north by a warlike people technically their fellow-citizens but alien in speech and culture, who regarded brigandage as the most honourable, indeed the only, profession for men of breeding. Such conditions do not make for good husbandry in any sense of the term.

These centuries of battle, murder, sudden death, pestilence and famine might well have sunk the Scottish people into a degradation from which no recovery was possible. Yet history presents few phenomena more remarkable than the rapid cultural development of Scotland after the Parliamentary Union of 1707. The Union gave Scotland not only economic freedom but, what was even more important, a strong settled govern-

ment. Under the new conditions the national character began to manifest unsuspected and even disconcerting reserves of strength. There was a dangerous moment in 1745. The baleful light of the fiery cross was kindled once more, but only to be extinguished in blood for the last time at Culloden. The defeat of Jacobitism was followed by the suppression of the clan system, whereby Scotland got rid of the last obstacle to the free development of her people. Thenceforward the country made such rapid progress that in a generation or so it was in a condition to submit to the industrial revolution without undue hurt.

This adaptability, this capacity to make up for centuries of lost time, is admirable, and Scotsmen are fully entitled to be proud of it. But its achievement must not be exaggerated. The accounts of the Time Spirit are not easily squared. With all the wit and all the will in the world a people who have enjoyed only two hundred years of prosperity and settled government are bound to differ in national character from a people who have enjoyed eight hundred. Their culture may conform to the same models, but it will not have the same colour and texture. Thus the Scot, though curiously conscientious, lacks that moral perspective that enables the Englishman as a mere matter of course to "do his duty" or "play the game". The Scotsman, too, can do these things. Generally he will make a point of doing them. But he has always to think them out first.

P R E F A C E

And traces of the old rudeness, the old individualism, the old wiliness will remain. Scotland has not yet been able to banish the tormenting spirit of faction and civil strife. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it took the form of ecclesiastical schism. Driven out of the churches in the twentieth century, it has entered politics and industry with results that have been disagreeably apparent since the War.

For the benefit of non-Scottish readers unfamiliar with the Presbyterian order, a few words of explanation may be added. The ministry, which consists of a single order, retains a "priestly" character to the extent that it has the exclusive right of expounding doctrine and administering religious ordinances. Ministers are sometimes described as "teaching presbyters". But for all purposes of church government and discipline they have associated with them "ruling presbyters", or elders. The lowest court of the church is the kirk-session, consisting of the minister as moderator and an indeterminate number of elders elected by the congregation. It exercises spiritual discipline over the congregation and administers the rite of ordination to persons elected to the eldership. Each kirk-session sends two members—the minister and an elder—to the local presbytery. The presbytery is the real unit of the Presbyterian system. While the area of its jurisdiction is no greater than a

rural deanery, the functions of the court are episcopal. It is the originating body for most church business. It ordains to the ministry and is the court of first instance in all disciplinary proceedings against the clergy. Two or three presbyteries sitting together form a synod, which is an intermediate appellate court. The supreme court of the Church is the General Assembly. It is elected by the presbyteries, the commissioners consisting of ministers and elders in equal proportions. The Assembly meets once a year. Before dissolving it passes an annual Act appointing all its members, *plus* one nominated by the Moderator, to be a Commission to deal with matters of urgency arising in the interval between Assemblies. The constitutional position of the Commission of Assembly was the subject of acrid controversy in the last stages of the Robertson Smith case. Proceedings in all Presbyterian Church courts are conducted according to precise forms and have a technical vocabulary borrowed from the Civil Courts and the old Scots Parliament. A curious term of art, which I have had occasion to use in the essay on Robertson Smith, is "overture". It means a formal request by a presbytery that the General Assembly shall take cognisance of some matter and proceed to appropriate action.

D. C.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	V
HENRY DRUMMOND: A MYSTERY	I
"SMITH O' AIBERDEEN"	54
JOHN STUART BLACKIE	121
KEIR HARDIE	155
LORD OVERTOUN	191
"CLAUDIUS CLEAR"	212

HENRY DRUMMOND : A MYSTERY

HENRY DRUMMOND was born in 1851, a year after Robert Louis Stevenson. He matriculated at Edinburgh University in the Faculty of Arts in 1866, a year before Stevenson matriculated in Science. From 1867 to 1875 the two were fellow-students, pursuing each in his own way an uncertain and to all appearance unprofitable career. They never met. Each played the charmer in his particular circle, but the circles did not touch, much less intersect. Had any chance encounter occurred between them it may be taken for granted that neither would have seen much to desire in the other. From Stevenson's point of view Drummond could only have been a sanctimonious young prig of mean attainments, who added to his offending by being a dandy and, in a genteel way, a sportsman. Drummond, for all his charity and real liking for odd characters, could hardly have seen in Stevenson anything but a youth of sickly habit, slovenly in dress and loose of life—in short, a generally unsavoury young man, who, having no more sense of his lost condition than he had of the supreme

importance of cleanliness and cricket, was not even interesting as a sinner.

To bracket two such names, to discern a parallelism in characters so divergent, to suggest that Drummond and Stevenson were in some sort spiritual congeners, may seem to the survivors of their generation an exercise in the perverse and the fantastic. Really it is only the common transmutation of paradox into platitude by lapse of time. These young men were twin apostles of that uneasy *Aufklärung* that marked the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They were children of the same race, generation and culture. Both came into the world exactly in the middle of the century. Neither lived to see the century out. Stevenson died in 1894, aged forty-four; Drummond in 1897, in his forty-sixth year. Both belonged to the affluent Scottish middle-class, and both puzzled their respective God-fearing families—Stevenson by the usual device of scandalising them, Drummond by subtler methods. Each had a great aptitude for drift, and each in the same year of grace (1874) found what he needed to give his life direction—the influence of a forceful, not to say coarse, man of genius. In Stevenson's case it was W. E. Henley, in Drummond's D. L. Moody. Three years later each had found his vocation. Stevenson was charming the readers of the *Cornhill*, and Drummond, who had migrated to Glasgow, was fascinating theological students and young iron-

moulders—the former on week-days by acquainting them in an agreeable manner with the elements of modern science, the latter on Sundays by playing the part of a new Ezekiel who could measure the New Jerusalem with the yardstick of Darwin and Huxley. These first youthful adventures resulted in two immensely popular books—*Virginibus Puerisque* and *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. Neither book had any intellectual merit that is worth considering at this time of day, but both were attuned to the mood of the generation and amazingly well written. Thenceforward Stevenson and Drummond ascended into fame *pari passu*. Both made their appeal to youth—*virginibus puerisque*—and became the centre of a cult that lasted nearly a generation and even now has its grey-haired votaries. Each, one is glad to think, matured considerably as time went on, enough in fact to raise the same question by his early death—What would he have done had he lived another twenty years?

In Stevenson's case the question, though interesting, is not important. He has left a permanent record by which he can be judged through all the eighteen years of his career. We can see his beginnings and trace the stages of his growth into the accomplished artist he was when he died. *Weir of Hermiston*, had it been finished, would have been a great work, but it is unlikely that it would have altered our general estimate of

the author. Stevenson, in the nature of the case, is an open book. There is no mystery about him. With Drummond, on the other hand, there are mysteries at every turn, at the end as well as at the beginning of his career. The first that one encounters is the mystery of his intellectual equipment. As a youth he was lively and intelligent but showed even less than average promise. Like Stevenson, he was an unsatisfactory student; but Stevenson had the excuse of wretched health, and even so he showed considerable aptitude for the two professions he successively studied. Drummond, who as boy and man was almost aggressively healthy, had a university career that was not even mediocre. There was no reason for this except a certain lack of moral fibre. It is certain that his natural abilities, though not distinguished, were sufficient, given a moderate degree of application and industry, to enable him to make a creditable showing. But to Drummond application was ever abhorrent. Diligent he could be in any matter that held his emotions, but throughout all his varied and eventful life there is not a single instance of his undertaking a task that was not thoroughly agreeable to him. Though at school he had been a promising Latinist nothing would induce him to acquire the very modest amount of Latin and Greek that sufficed for a Scottish pass degree in the seventies. "I never had courage", he once remarked with characteristic

blandness, "to attempt the classical department of the M.A." What he meant was that he simply could not be bothered. It would have meant drudgery, and Henry Drummond, though rather vague on many things, was quite clear on one point—that drudgery was not for him. Who shall blame him? He probably had a shrewd notion of the kind of part for which Heaven had cast him. We have a suggestive picture of the youth from a fellow-student. "He generally wore a tall hat and had long auburn hair. Though I fain would have spoken to him, his ethereal appearance and great grace and refinement seemed to forbid an approach to one who appeared different from the majority of students. . . . He struck me as one possessed by great thoughts which were polarising in his mind and giving a happy expression to his face."

Great thoughts polarising in his mind! Drummond was always able to convey that valuable suggestion of himself. He was not consciously posing; he could not help looking interesting. But there is no evidence that at that time he thought either greatly or at all. In the course of his life he had at least one good idea, but good ideas are not great thoughts. No, the chances are that the red-haired youth with the top-hat who stood in solitary elegance at the north-east corner of the Old Buildings quad. was pondering the possibility of regenerating the world by the development of "animal

magnetism" and telepathy, a species of mountebankery in which he had great faith and considerable gifts. Presently he would float gracefully from lecture-room to lecture-room, doing here a little philosophy not so badly and there a little science really well, but never addressing himself to the solid business of taking a degree. He left the University without one. After entering upon his theological curriculum he had some thought of a degree in science, but two failures in Part I. of the B.Sc. made him give that up also. There is no excuse for his *laches*. His interest in the humanities may have been superficial and his capacity for them meagre, but he had a real scientific gift, and Geikie found in him not merely an apt pupil but a geologist of rare talent that just fell short of genius.

In these circumstances it was fortunate for Drummond that he had an indulgent father who was content to let a favourite son do pretty much as he pleased. Why not? Henry was a delightful lad. Everybody said so. He had no vices, which was a great comfort when one considered what young men were apt to be. He was genuinely religious and accepted the perfection of evangelical dogma as beyond dispute. He was studying for the ministry: a candidate so suitable might be allowed to study in his own way, which was doubtless God's way, being mysterious. Henry himself, however, when questioned about his intentions, was rather vague,

even evasive. The ministry—yes, of course, he was studying for the ministry. But there would be a note of hesitancy in his voice, suggesting that at the back of his mind he cherished a pious hope that Providence had something better in store for him than the dreary round of a professional parson. Meanwhile let him spend his days in innocent enjoyment. Germany was an attractive idea. It had become the fashion in the later nineteenth century for Scottish theological students to go for a season to Göttingen, Tübingen or Bonn, just as in the eighteenth century it had been the fashion for Scottish law students to go to Leyden or Utrecht. Henry Drummond had friends who were going to Tübingen. It would be very jolly to be with them. And so to Tübingen Henry went. His father had no qualms. Henry's orthodoxy would be proof against the virus of German scepticism. Henry, no doubt, was of the same confident opinion, but to make assurance doubly sure he carefully avoided lectures. This, at least, is a fair inference from the fact that neither of the two fellow-students (destined to be lifelong intimates) who accompanied him was ever able to say what courses he attended or what were his studies. We do know, however, that he was not idle. Henry was never idle. He was at pains to learn good *Hoch-Deutsch*, joined a Studentsverein, sang songs, drank beer, assisted at duels, made himself agreeable to Lutheran

pastors and discreetly charming to Lutheran pastors' daughters, and went with German cronies upon expeditions to the Black Forest.

On his return from Germany in the autumn of 1873 Drummond did a curious, and as events proved, a very significant thing, though the significance was not perceived at the time. He decided to suspend his theological studies for a year and divide his time between natural science and mission work in the slums. The sudden change of plan and the queer assortment of activities does not seem to have excited any comment. It was just Henry Drummond's way and another example of his constitutional weakness for always finding something more important than the business in hand. But Drummond knew better. He had got the first glimpse of his destiny.

He gave a revelation of his mind in an address which he delivered as president of the New College Theological Society. The subject was Spiritual Diagnosis. The training for the ministry, he argued, was seriously defective in that it had no "clinical" side. The pulpit, no doubt, had its place, but its value as a method of saving souls was limited by the fact that its appeal was to the mass, whereas souls are individuals. Preaching was easy, "but to draw souls one by one, to buttonhole them and take from them the secret of their lives, to talk them clear out of themselves, to read them off like a page of print,

to pervade them with your spiritual essence and make them transparent, *this* is the Spiritual Diagnosis which is so difficult to acquire and so hard to practise". Yet in this difficult and paramount task of his calling the divinity student received no systematic instruction, for the simple reason that the phenomena of the spiritual life had never been the subject of scientific study. It was essential, therefore, that there should be "a spiritual science" analogous to natural science, an inductive study of the soul, observing, recording, distinguishing, classifying and relating the phenomena of the spiritual life.

It is said by one who was present on the occasion that Drummond's exposition of his thesis "electrified us", which may fairly be taken to mean that it made his audience's hair stand on end. Nobody now would turn even one hair. We have been glutted with stuff of the sort by Freud and others. But in 1873 Freud was but a medical student at Vienna, and the only people who dabbled in such speculations were Ritualistic curates, with whom Drummond had no acquaintance. It is a curious coincidence that at the very moment when Drummond was "electrifying" the serious young Scots of New College, Edinburgh, Samuel Butler in the shabby seclusion of Clifford's Inn was writing *The Way of All Flesh*, and telling how the accomplished rascal Pryer "electrified" Ernest Pontifex in the same way. "You know, my dear Pontifex,

it is all very well to quarrel with Rome, but Rome has reduced the treatment of the human soul to a science, while our own Church, though so much purer in many respects, has no organised system either of diagnosis or pathology—I mean, of course, spiritual diagnosis and spiritual pathology. . . . The history of all ages has shown—and surely you must know this as well as I do—that as men cannot cure the bodies of their patients if they have not been properly trained in hospitals under skilled teachers, so neither can souls be cured of their hidden ailments without the help of men who are skilled in soul craft—or, in other words, of priests.”

The argument, even to the phrasing, is the same. Butler, as a satirist, has simply added the little that was lacking from Drummond’s exposition to make it diabolical. (Though how avidly, one thinks, would Butler, in that same capacity of satirist, have leapt upon the Drummond phrase of “buttonholing” souls!) As Drummond stated it the idea was wonderfully attractive, and at the same time uncomfortable, sinister, even terrifying to young men who had hitherto implicitly accepted the decent Protestant tradition that the soul is a sanctuary to which God alone has the right of access. But Henry Drummond could never see the matter in that light. He was conscious of no taboo. As a boy in his teens he had defended mesmerism on the ground that “in a reasonable universe the Creator cannot

have isolated men from each other nor shut each up in his own prison body". As a man he could not conceive of any soul as inviolable; any soul, that is, but his own.

Within a few weeks there was given to Drummond a remarkable opportunity of putting his principles into practice. While he was still amusing himself in Germany, two determined men, Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey, had sailed from America to Liverpool to convert Great Britain and Ireland to Christianity. Their outfit for the enterprise consisted of a fair amount of sincere religion, a good deal of practical insight, an unlimited stock of assurance and an harmonium. Owing to their ignorance of the terrain their campaign made a poor start. They toured the North of England. But the North of England was peopled by men of tough old evangelical stock who were making an incredible deal of money and dictating national policy accordingly. With these sure tokens that God was with them they felt no need to let their hearts be troubled nor to have their souls hustled into Heaven by a couple of smart Yankee drummers. Only a lucky accident saved the mission from an early and ignominious failure. Reaching Newcastle-on-Tyne in no very cheerful mood the evangelists were heard by an impressionable Scottish minister who persuaded them to try their luck across the Border. They went to Edinburgh. In Edinburgh they "made good".

The sudden change of fortune was remarkable, but it may be explained. As an individual the Scotsman is no more—perhaps less—religious than the Englishman, but in the mass his emotions are far more easily stirred. Why this should be is not clear, but the most probable reason is that, as compared with England, Scotland's social and political culture is of a recent and rapid growth. From the Union of the Parliaments Scotland had to compress into little more than one century the progress that in England had been spread over at least three. The result is that even to this day Scotland as a social unit is much less stable than England and much more liable to revert to the herd movements that are characteristic of a backward community. Moody and Sankey discovered this in 1873, just as Mr. Gladstone was to discover it to the great advantage of his party when he went to Midlothian seven years later. But there was another reason, or rather another aspect of the same reason. The industrial revolution had brought great wealth to Scotland as to England, but the spiritual reaction was not the same. England was inured to wealth. Apart from the landed interest there had been for centuries a rich and increasingly influential burgess class who were very much on the side of the angels. From them Puritanism and Nonconformity drew their political strength, and Cromwell's triumph was due not so much to his Ironsides as to the fact that he had the support of the men who

commanded most of the liquid assets of the country. The industrial revolution and the great economic expansion of the Victorian era inflated this class to an enormous extent, but so stable and well disciplined was the English social order that the hordes of industrial *parvenus* accepted without question the ethic of the class they had invaded, viz. that material prosperity was the sure mark of a good man, whence, by a bad but very human logic, it followed that poverty was at least strong presumptive evidence of depravity.

The case of Scotland was different. Prior to the industrial revolution the country had not only been backward but stricken with poverty to a degree that is hard to conceive nowadays. The nobility, to preserve the outward decencies of life, had no resource but to sell themselves to one or other of the English political factions, and this they did without scruple. The burgess class was small, feeble and pusillanimous. The burden of the struggle with the Crown in the seventeenth century, which in England was borne by the rich bourgeoisie, in Scotland fell upon the peasantry and lesser gentry, who having neither goods to lose nor bribeworthy service to offer had no option but to be poor and honest. Hence it came about that the same kind of "saintliness" which in England was associated with affluence was in Scottish tradition associated with penury; and even those who, like Burns, discarded con-

ventional religion, were still apt to treat the higher moral virtues as a monopoly of the poor.

The industrial revolution, therefore, was very upsetting to Scottish ethics. It made a cynical mockery of the old boast of "honest poverty". How, under the new order, could poverty be honest? It was the rich, not the poor, who practised the sturdy virtues and were zealous for pure religion; it was the poor, not the rich, who were vicious and ungodly. To the English middle-classes this was a platitude, and they could contemplate the ugliness of industrialism with equanimity and even unction. But to the newly enriched Scots it was a bewildering paradox. They had to believe the evidence of their senses, but they could not be comfortable about it. Their scruples were not such as to make them pause in their money-making—their diligence in that regard has become proverbial—nor did they feel that they were in any way to blame for the destruction of bodies and souls that was entailed in the system by which they were enriched. But they did feel that some adjustment *sub specie aeternitatis* was required. With that object they became very earnest about spiritual things, the argument being that an increase of religion among the industrial rich would in the sight of God be a set-off to the excessive sinfulness of the industrial poor. It was obvious, too, that in order to present a satisfactory balance-sheet to the Almighty it was necessary not only to increase

the community's reserves of godliness but to effect substantial economies on the sin account—that is to say the poor must have the Gospel preached to them. This attitude of mind was already prevalent among the Scottish moneyed-classes in the 'thirties, and Thomas Chalmers made full use of it for his social projects. In 1843, however, the Disruption of the Scottish Church diverted the energies of Chalmers and his coterie into a less profitable channel. Thenceforward the merchants and manufacturers were directed that their first duty to God was to provide Scotland with a Free Church and to sign cheques accordingly, which they did without stint. But as a religious exercise the signing of cheques has limitations. Like the wearing of a hair shirt it argues but does not create enthusiasm, and after nearly a generation of it the middle-classes felt the need of something more. Even in the pulpit there was a growing suspicion that standard Calvinism highly spiced with abuse of the Establishmentarian "rump" was losing its virtue and that a new source of fervour was much to be desired. It was at this lucky moment that Moody and Sankey arrived. They supplied what was wanted, and the middle-classes heard them gladly. As for the clerical leaders of the Free Church, these handled the situation with a cynical prudence worthy of the best traditions of ecclesiastical statecraft. They might dislike Moody's theology; they certainly detested

Sankey's hymns and harmonium; but they were astute enough to discern the signs of the times and to perceive therein the possible benefit to what lay nearest their hearts. Hostility or even indifference to the movement would be dangerous, whereas judicious exploitation might be of the greatest advantage to the beloved Church. And as Moody and Sankey were not only willing but eager to work through ecclesiastical channels, it was obvious that the parties could deal. Thus the tacit bargain was struck. The Free Church lent its organisation, whereby the Yankee evangelists got enough way on to carry them in triumph through the formerly apathetic English provinces even to the goal of London itself. And in return the Free Church enjoyed an access of zeal among the laity that stabilised the financial position for another generation. Incidentally souls were saved. The completed manœuvre stood in need of no greater justification than that usually accorded to wisdom by her children.

Drummond, of course, had no such motive, but he was in the movement from the first. As soon as Moody and Sankey arrived in Edinburgh he offered his services and was accepted as a worker. For nearly two years he was their most valued assistant. Studies were first abandoned, then forgotten. He toured the United Kingdom with the Great Mission. His father, whose wonted indulgence was now fortified with admiration and thankfulness to God, supplied

the necessary funds—for Henry could hardly ever be prevailed upon to dip his fingers into the evangelists' hat. He would go short rather. "I shall ride once more upon a 'bus," he wrote from London acknowledging a handsome remittance, "and pay my way like a man and a Drummond." And this was not merely Scotch pride; it was an example of that social fastidiousness which was perhaps Drummond's most obvious characteristic. Sir George Adam Smith does not exaggerate in claiming that he might have been model for Steele's celebrated portrait of "a fine gentleman". It seems strange, therefore, that this same fine and fastidious young gentleman should have found it possible not only to be associated with but to take a prominent part in a movement that, even with due allowance for merits, was crude, blatant and in some of its aspects disgusting. Sentiments of which Mr. Jefferson Brick and the Watertoast Sympathisers would not have been ashamed garnished Mr. Moody's preaching of the Gospel, while Mr. Sankey's singing of the same was an outrage of which it is difficult to speak with moderation. To suppose that religious zeal rendered Drummond oblivious of these immundities, to picture him as swept away in the furious current of general emotion, is to ignore the ascertained facts. Neither Moody nor anybody else ever "converted" Drummond. We have his own word for it that he never experienced a religious

crisis, and he was quite complacent about what he evidently regarded as a fortunate immunity. We know also that the mission offended his taste in many ways. It is certain that if Moody and Sankey had been ordinary revivalists, depending solely on the mass appeal and vast disorderly noisy meetings, Drummond would not have wasted a day on them. But Moody not only kept his great meetings comparatively quiet but had a new invention. This was the "inquiry-room", wherein souls that had been awakened by the mass appeal could be dealt with individually. To those who disliked the mission this was the most objectionable feature of all. To Drummond, who like many fastidious people had very little sensibility, it was really the only thing that mattered. It was a school in which he could perfect himself in "spiritual diagnosis"—a rough school, no doubt, but the only one available. The teachers were no better than horse-doctors, but much may be learned from a good horse-doctor by an active young man of scientific habit. And the clinical material was good and abundant. Such was the spirit in which Drummond joined Moody and Sankey. It lacked ardour, but that was soon supplied. Once the initial nausea was over evangelising became less and less a scientific pursuit and more and more an exciting game. Being a fisher of men is great sport; at least, so Drummond found it. One must bear in mind his method. Others might handle the miraculous

draughts that broke the nets and wellnigh swamped the boat. He himself (adept fly-fisher from boyhood) cast for the individual fish, played him, grassed him in triumph, cast his fly again, and never went deeper than he could wade. The fish, ancient symbol of mystery and divinity, dweller in the element that is at once life and death, shining, swift and subtle—*animula, vagula, blandula*—that was Drummond's image of the soul. To exchange the rôle of fisherman for that of shepherd, to see souls as silly sheep—symbols of vacuity and sacrifice, with himself under the spreading beech piping feebly twice each Sabbath day while the creatures browsed—the thought was intolerable.

So it was with some difficulty that Henry was dissuaded from following Moody and Sankey to America and committing himself to the career of a strolling evangelist. Rather dolefully he returned to New College, Hebrew, Church history, Christian apologetics and systematic theology. No doubt it was with a bitter pang that he read in these shades of the prison-house Moody's artless appeal that came to him from Philadelphia at the end of the year. "Could you come over and help us? We want you much, and will see that all expenses are paid. I think you would get a few thousand souls on these shores." He did not go. When nearly four years later he paid his first visit to America his mission had nothing to do with souls.

There were three men whose converging influences during this period determined the peculiar course of Drummond's life. Moody, as we have seen, was one. Another was Marcus Dods, Robertson Smith's friend and nearly his fellow-martyr. The third was Geikie. Whether Drummond ever realised the extent of his debt to his master in science is doubtful. His admiration for Moody—it amounted almost to an infatuation—left him with little to spare for others. Yet Geikie's influence was just the wholesome bracing thing he most needed, whereas Moody's from the beginning had as much bane as benefit in it, and by the time the great Mission came to an end it was positively demoralising. It unsettled him for serious study and instilled the pernicious idea that a man of his parts and charm could live very well and religiously on his wits. The result was that Drummond's last year at New College was probably the most unhappy season of his life. He was unwilling to enter the ministry, but could see no alternative. It was mainly due to Geikie that his troubles were brought to an end. In 1877 a lectureship in Natural Science at the Glasgow Free Church College fell vacant. For a man who could write nothing after his name, except "*B.Sc. (failed)*", to apply for such a post required some courage, but just then Drummond had the courage of despair. He appealed to Geikie for help. Geikie gave it so enthusiastically that Drummond was

appointed. From that day his life was an unbroken record of happiness and success. His luck in getting the lectureship was, perhaps, better than he deserved. The pay was not great, but it was more than the stipend of many a grey-headed country minister. The duties were absurdly light, viz. four simple lectures a week during a session of five months and the rest of the year to follow his pleasure in travel and preaching. Then, in the summer of 1879, Geikie did him another signal service by choosing him as his assistant in a geological expedition to the Rockies. This experience was invaluable to Drummond in two ways. It gave him a practical knowledge of scientific exploration and thus qualified him for the important commission for which he was selected a few years later—the exploration of the Nyasa and Tanganyika region on behalf of the African Lakes Corporation. But, still better, it provided a spiritual discipline and corrective that he badly needed, taking his mind out of the stuffy atmosphere of the inquiry-room into God's fresh air. His diary of the expedition breathes a spirit of enjoyment that is much more wholesome than the feverish delight of his letters during the Moody campaign. There is no reflection, nothing but disjointed notes of hard facts registered by a very sharp young mind. "Fishing, caught a two-and-a-half-pounder, sluggish, not game. . . . Came to log shanty, store for miners, got gold specimen from miner

in next shanty ; a ranch burned by Indians two years ago. . . . Presently the magnificent buck dashed past at full speed—flying shot, must have missed. Fired at a doe coming behind—must have struck her originally as, although Jack fired at her, three bullets were in her when she dropped. Jack had shot another through the forelegs, which I killed with my revolver. During the retreat Jack surprised a second herd, and killed one more. Total, four antelopes—all does.” From which it appears that Drummond, like many excellent men, was a keen and callous hunter. In killing or maiming any wild creature he was as merciless as any primitive man, and then, in the plenitude of his modernity, he would scribble a little note on “tenacity of life”, from personal experiences that he at any rate did not find repellent. Still, deer-stalking is great sport for a healthy young man, especially if it diverts his mind from such dubious occupations as “button-holing souls”, and there is nothing pleasanter about Drummond’s record of the expedition to the Rockies than its freedom from his former preoccupation. A letter to his mother, when he was in the heart of Colorado, contains what is practically the only reference to a religious matter—a characteristically lively and light-hearted account of a funeral. (Death, whether in man or beast, never worried him ; he could write of the death of his dearest friend with exquisite propriety but almost as coolly as he records the

slaying of an antelope or wildebeest.) A miner had died at a distant camp, and Drummond, as the nearest thing to a minister within a hundred miles or so, consented to officiate in uncanonical tweeds redeemed by a white tie bought at the local store "which gave me a sufficiently professional look for the mountains". As might be expected, he rose to the occasion brilliantly. The funeral oration was such that the camp clamoured for more, and he was not the man to disoblige them. A second and most exhilarating diet of worship was held, after which the miners gave him tea and dismissed him in friendly fashion "loaded with specimens of gold". This was all very harmless, but when he reached Boston on his journey home a *nostalgie de la boue* seized him. He must needs dash off to see Moody and Sankey at Cleveland, where he found things going on in the same old way that had delighted him in Scotland and England—"perishing men and women finding their way to prayer-meeting, Bible-reading and inquiry-room". To get this gratifying intelligence and to find that Moody's collar was still in a chronic state of crush and that Sankey's black necktie was as faultless as ever, he refused an invitation to meet Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes at dinner.

Nevertheless, the knowledge that the good work was going on in the good old way seems to have been enough for him, for he gave no sign of any disposition to stay in America and

take part in it. Moody and Sankey were all very well in 1873 ; they served their turn, and Drummond was eternally obliged to them. But he was some critical years older now, and, though he would hardly have admitted it even to himself, his visit to Cleveland probably gave him a hint that he had grown a bit and that Moody-and-Sankeyism as a spiritual garment was getting rather tight about the chest : a rising young man of science must have room to breathe. Further, though Drummond's mind was essentially limited and unadventurous, his spirit was bold, unconventional and intolerant of interference. He liked his own way and usually he got it. He had refused to settle down to a regular ministry because it would have involved his accommodating himself to other men ; later, as we shall see, he refused to enter politics for the same reason ; and much as he loved Moody, he would not be his underling. Drummond was not of the stuff of which disciples are made. In the circumstances he was well content to take an affectionate farewell of his old friends, wish them the best of luck and hasten back to Glasgow where, a year before, he had found an outlet for his evangelising zeal that was much more to his taste than anything he saw at Cleveland.

It was associated, too, with the personality that had begun to supplant Moody in his regard, Marcus Dods, then minister of Renfield Church, Glasgow, and afterwards professor of New Testa-

ment Exegesis at New College. That on settling in Glasgow Drummond should have elected to "sit under" a notorious modernist like Dods and become one of his elders and his bosom friend at the very time when a heresy libel was being framed against him was the first indication of the new phase that within a few years was to make the name of Henry Drummond famous throughout the English-speaking world. Of this there will be something to say presently. To begin with, Drummond's attachment to Dods was not so much due to intellectual considerations as to the fact that Dods was able to offer him the plaything he coveted, which, as he expressed it, was "a quiet mission somewhere, entry immediate and self-contained". (The stipulation "self-contained" is significant—no irksome contacts with neighbours.) This was a mission-station which Dod's congregation had established in the Possilpark district—a peculiarly doleful corner of the vineyard that would have broken, or at least dulled, the spirit of the general run of the Lord's labourers. But Drummond, who to his last painful breath was a perfect Mark Tapley, spent four unconquerably jolly years there. He worked hard, experimented a good deal and made his mission a brilliant success. From this it must not be inferred that he had any warm feeling for poor men as such, any more than he had for black men when he left Possilpark and went to Central Africa. Both had their places in the Divine

order, widely different no doubt, but so remote from Henry Drummond's place that the difference was negligible. Although his experience did ultimately make him realise that poverty is a social problem and not merely a disagreeable accident of individual lives, the moral aspect of the question never troubled him. From his point of view, which was the point of view of the ordinary comfortable Victorian, poverty was bad because it put the poor man's soul in peril; but souls could always be saved by liberal doses of the Gospel, so why worry about the poverty? When this comfortable doctrine was put to the test of a hard winter in Possilpark and came out of it badly, Drummond's reaction was merely one of mild petulance. "Thousands have been really starving," he wrote early in 1879, "and out here I have had to feed scores of families with the meat that perisheth and a scant seasoning only of the other." Here was no diagnosing of maladies of the soul, only the filling of healthy, hungry bellies. Divine Providence can be very trying at times. Fortunately, Drummond was far too good-natured to allow mere petulance to get the better of him, and above all he had that boyish genius for play and leadership in the lighter things of life of which Mark Twain has given the perfect picture in *Tom Sawyer*.¹ No matter what

¹ Drummond met Mark Twain at Hartford, Conn., in 1887, and recognised a kindred soul, though his manner of noting the event had a disconcerting touch of Scotch Philistinism. "He is funnier than any of his books, and, to my surprise (*sic*), is a most respected

the circumstances were, city slum or country-house party, he could always get people interested in the game that was on, and it was always a game of his choosing. In Possilpark the game was so successful that at the end of four years the mission-station was ready to be raised to the status of a full charge.

This happy result having been achieved, Drummond retired and looked about for a change of scene. In 1883 Moody and Sankey conducted their second mission in Great Britain, which was a very damp affair. Drummond dutifully assisted them, but could hardly conceal his boredom with the whole business. In his own queer way he had been reflecting during the last four years, which so pleased him that he had written a book about it that was even then in the press. With a journalistic perception of the signs of the time worthy of a Northcliffe he had solemnly labelled it *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. It was, as he always protested, only a sort of a book, quite a good sort, of course, but still only a sort—the kind of thing that one does not plan but which just happens. He has left a vivacious account of its origins which, though it must not be taken as serious history—Drummond was a born *raconteur* and his stories lost nothing in the telling—is true to this extent, that the author hardly anticipated more from it than a young man's pleasure at

citizen devoted to things æsthetic, and the friend of the poor and struggling."

seeing his name on a title page for the first time. There was also, perhaps, a touch of pique in his anxiety to get his "Sunday talks to working men" into book form. At the Glasgow College he found himself among men like T. M. Lindsay and A. B. Bruce¹—men of commanding intellect and formidable scholarship. He liked his colleagues and he knew that they liked him, but he also knew that they did not like his evangelistic antecedents and that they did not take him very seriously as a teacher, which vexed him. The prevailing sentiment at the College was an advanced, though not aggressive liberalism, which Drummond absorbed with a facility that in a more intellectual man would scarce have been honest. His own explanation of his change of outlook is as jaunty and vague as Topsy's "'specks I grewed"; for all its choice scientific diction amounts to no more. The expert in "spiritual diagnosis" never seems to have had the most elementary knowledge of the physiology of his own spirit. That, however, did not occur to him, and consequently did not trouble him. His main concern was to prove that he could be as good a theological liberal as anyone, and could go one better than most theological liberals by propounding a constructive philosophy of religion. It is a notorious conceit of every village-bred Scotsman that he is a born philosopher, and

¹ Professor of Christian Apologetics, Gifford lecturer at the University of Glasgow, 1897-98.

Drummond was full of it. The fact that he had never shown any serious interest in or aptitude for philosophic studies did not daunt him, for he despised the philosophy of the schools. The pupil of Moody and Sankey was all for Huxley and Tyndall and the scientific cock-a-whoopery of his generation. Consequently, when candid friends told Drummond that the "philosophy" of *Natural Law* was mostly nonsense, he was not in the least impressed: they were mere schoolmen to whom the truth had not been revealed. Later, it is true, he was constrained to admit that on the whole they were right, but his faith in his mission as a philosopher of religion remained unshaken to the end.

Who can blame him? Looking at what befell in 1884, 1885 and 1886 one marvels rather at the humility of his claim. He had no apostolic dreams when he let down his net, only a boyish ambition. And lo, the miraculous draught that broke the net and weighed down the vessel!

As it happened, when *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* was published in June 1883, Drummond had a new enterprise to interest him, and hardly gave a thought to the book or its fate. The African Lakes Corporation, which was controlled by a syndicate of Glasgow merchants, had commissioned him at very short notice to make a scientific survey of the Nyasa and Tanganyika region. Before the first reviews of *Natural Law* appeared he was steaming down the Red Sea in

high spirits at the prospect of an adventure which combined so many agreeable features. He was his own master; the scientific work he had to do was responsible but within his compass, and he did it conscientiously and well; there were Free Church mission-stations where he could find and give spiritual refreshment; and there were swarms of wild things to shoot. As to this last there is a characteristic note in his diary. "Moir and Lieutenant Pully went off to shoot elephants at Kimbashi. Much tempted to go with them. . . . They sent *eighteen tusks back*, capital sport." Three weeks after writing these words the disappointed Nimrod had something more exciting than the slaughter of elephants to think about. The first mails since he had left home five months before reached him near Nyasa. They told him that *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* was a clamorous success, that reviewers were outreaching one another in pæans of praise over it, that within a few weeks of publication this his compilation of Sunday Talks to Working Men had already gone into a second edition and none could tell how many more would be called for, as the sales were increasing every day. It was one of Drummond's gifts that he could take great good fortune calmly, indeed as of his right, but he admits that he lay awake that night. Apart from that the only comment on the news in his diary is a Pepysian "which surprised me", with reference to the *Spectator's* review. And well it

might surprise even him; for upon such a book as his the verdict of R. H. Hutton's organ was treated by the men of the 'eighties as final. The oracle had placed him among the seers and he could hail the future with the exulting cry, "sublimi feriam sidera vertice". He returned home in triumph just in time for the General Assembly of 1884, which raised the lectureship in Natural Science to the dignity of a chair and elected him professor by acclamation. Fate, which produces many a good play very badly, had been in a happy mood over Henry Drummond. He stepped into the limelight straight from darkest Africa. (Not that anybody talks of Darkest Africa—or indeed of darkest anything nowadays. The phrase was killed by the savage humour of William Booth with his *Darkest England*, and in any case could not have survived some of the European incidents since Drummond's day, but in the 'eighties and early 'nineties it had a glamour.)

What follows constitutes a problem well calculated to interest the so-called student of human nature, for there is no solution to it. There is no mystery about the success of *Natural Law*. It was not a great book—few best sellers are—but it had qualities, and the public that bought it showed more intelligence than did the public that bought, say, *Proverbial Philosophy* or *Festus*. Above all, it was opportune. But it does not explain Drummond's *personal* vogue as a fashion-

able religious teacher. It was merely the trumpet or drum that announced the show. The show was Drummond himself, and a most remarkable show it must have been that could take a ducal mansion in Mayfair for its booth and crowd a great ball-room on three successive Sundays in the height of the season. For that is what Henry Drummond did in April and May 1885, and it declares at once the strength and the weakness of the man that he was prevailed upon to do it. He was incapable of anything so blatant as conceiving the idea of a "mission" to the West End of London, but he could not, once it was made, resist the suggestion. It came from Lord Aberdeen, one of the many new and influential friends that Drummond owed to *Natural Law*, and took the form of a proposal for a series of "lectures". A vain man would have been flattered by it into a hasty and effusive acceptance; a modest man would have refused even to consider it; but Drummond was neither vain nor modest. He parleyed with Lord Aberdeen on the subject with a *sang-froid* and assurance that would argue profound astuteness were they not also consistent with an extreme degree of simplicity. He would not say no, but there were difficulties. He was fully occupied with a religious movement among students which had shown all the signs of being "a distinct work of God", and besides he had no opinion of "lectures" as a means of grace. "I should really have some faith", he wrote "in

addresses of a simple kind—not written lectures, but clear statements of what Christianity really is, what personal religion really is, and evangelical matter generally. To attempt this would be very much more trying; but if the call came I would feel that I dared not shrink from it.”

Of course the call came. Drummond never did anything but on his own conditions, and these were invariably accepted. An intimation appeared in the Society column of the *Morning Post* that the first of a series of three discourses would be delivered by Professor Henry Drummond at Grosvenor House on the last Sunday in April. No subject was announced. On the appointed day a decorous mob of Cabinet ministers, peers, Society women and young men about town filled the ball-room. (From dreams of such a pool the angler usually wakes before he has cast a line.) Their experience there was novel, even disconcerting, but not unpleasantly so. Certainly the person of the prophet they had come out for to see was interesting. Drummond was only thirty-four, and but for the grey with which an arduous year in tropical Africa had streaked the shining red of his hair, might have been taken for even less. He wore neatly trimmed mutton chop whiskers and a finicky little upturned moustache. (Later he abandoned this fashion and wore his moustache longer and drooping, but he always retained the whiskers.) His bright hazel eyes were remarkable both for their colour, which was

as it were sun filled, and for their gaze which, though not what is called piercing, was keen and brilliantly steady. He was above the middle height, rather slender but broad shouldered and well proportioned, with a grace of movement which was, however, of the precise and even formal kind. His clothes were faultless. He might indeed have passed for a Guardsman, especially as, in addition to his other gifts, there was nothing in his appearance to suggest intellectual pretensions. In short he was an extremely handsome, attractive and well turned-out young man. Speaking afterwards of his Society début Drummond said with a grin that he had never felt so horrid in his life, but it does not appear that any sign of diffidence or self-consciousness escaped him. He began his address, and presently it dawned upon his audience that they were listening to the last thing they had expected to hear—a discourse on conversion, expressed with great ingenuity and charm in terms of modern thought, but genuine evangelical stuff none the less. When at the end of an hour the preacher said, “Let us pray”, they were dazed but they knelt. Next Sunday in addition to the ball-room an ante-room had to be opened to cope with the crowd that came.

Drummond’s London triumph was complete, but whether it was a legitimate triumph is an open question. As a social *tour de force* it was perfect, but there is not much more to be said for it. At

Grosvenor House he was on his mettle. His audience consisted of men and women whose outlook differed *toto coelo* from his own and who, besides being quicker witted and better educated, knew far more about the hard realities of human nature than any audience he had ever before been called upon to handle. That he should have succeeded in not only interesting them but winning their respect was an achievement to be proud of; St. Paul in similar circumstances did not do nearly so well. As a display of virtuosity it had a personal value for Drummond by affording him a *réclame* of a kind that at that juncture was very useful to him, but by that same token its religious value was nil. And even when judged from the personal standpoint its effect was equivocal. Certainly it was the means of averting a great deal of unpleasantness with which he was threatened by some of his countrymen and fellow-churchmen. *Natural Law*, with its audacious attempt to construct a Christian apologetic out of the teachings of natural science, had scandalised the orthodox, and its author was freely denounced as a Judas, a more poisonous reptile even than Robertson Smith. There was ample material for a first-class heresy hunt. True, the "lynching", as Drummond had called it, of Robertson Smith had been a sickening affair, and many of those who had taken part in it had no stomach for another job of the sort, but that would not have deterred the zealots. Grosvenor

House, however, made it impossible for them to take effective action, because against Drummond they could not count on the support of the wealthy elders whose attitude was always in the last resort the deciding factor in Free Church politics. These, like many other worthy men, were snobs. It was easy to mobilise them against Robertson Smith, who was only a man of genius and a great scholar and teacher, but it was impossible to make them doubt the orthodoxy of one who had the approval of the "best people". And so to the end of his life Drummond never had to put up with anything worse than a few abusive newspaper articles and a fair proportion of scurrilous letters (mostly anonymous) in his morning mail.¹

But while the Grosvenor House adventure may have been advantageous to Drummond in one quarter it was undoubtedly detrimental to him in another, as he was presently to find to his chagrin. Although he owed much to the praise with which Anglican writers had received *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, clerical opinion in England was as a whole unsympathetic, and it was provoked to positive antipathy by his appearance as a fashionable evangelist. The Church

¹ An amusing variant of this form of attack came to the author's notice in Glasgow one Sunday morning shortly after the appearance of *The Ascent of Man*. Posted on the door of the Free Church College was a tiny slip of paper bearing the couplet :

"O monkey Drummond, mighty Christian man,
What new dirt gospel next? Come tell me if you can."

newspapers were sour about him and his doctrine. They even hinted that he was a bit of a mountebank—a cruel accusation that he was bound to feel. It was easy enough to see that Drummond was not really a knowledgeable man, and that his thinking was vague and incoherent. It was also easy to see that he loved publicity and that he was well aware that, within certain limits, he was a complete master of the arts of the platform. The inference drawn was the natural uncharitable one that he was exploiting his gifts from motives of gain or vanity. Now nothing is plainer than that by his temperament, his natural gifts, his tastes, his opportunities, even his religious dogma, Drummond had every temptation to be a mountebank. He was saved only by the prevenient grace of God in making him a gentleman and a Christian; but as his Anglican critics could not be expected to know that, we need not blame them too much for judging him in accordance with natural injustice. They saw only that the Grosvenor House discourses, an ominous beginning, were being followed up by a campaign of drawing-room meetings in support of a fantastic scheme “for setting all the unemployed in the West End to work”, and that dear Professor Drummond showed all the symptoms of being a craze of frivolity (largely feminine) in its most detestable mood—the mood of pretending to be serious.

Drummond did not realise into what a false

position he had drifted until the following October when he went to Oxford to organise a series of meetings in support of the religious movement among students. As he went as a guest of the Warden of All Souls, and had many flattering assurances of help, he imagined in his Scottish innocence of Oxford ways that his visit would be a success, perhaps a crowning triumph. And indeed he was able to write home about the "seething mass of undergraduates" which was his first meeting at Trinity. But Oxford had made up its mind about him, and had prepared his humiliation. Certain heads of colleges vied with one another in giving individual displays of the fine art of being perfectly beastly in the gentlemanly way, notably Jowett and Liddell. In the malicious eyes of the former Drummond was too good a chance to be missed. He wrote a demure little note suggesting, "if I may make the proposal", that the evangelist should dine with him *tête à tête*. And, of course, the lad accepted joyfully.

It would be of passing interest to have the full record of that dinner. Drummond's own chronicle of it is notably abstract and brief. "I thought my dinner with the Vice-Chancellor very sad," he writes. "We were entirely alone and had a good talk, also occasional silences. He asked me if in Scotland we were now giving up belief in Miracles—he meant as a sign of progress." One may infer that one, and that the

vastest, of the occasional silences followed that question—Jowett chuckling inwardly at having suppressed a raw upstart, and Drummond, all in amaze at the acute little old gentleman's gift of irrelevance, musing, "And this is Oxford!" But it was more in anger than in sorrow that he wrote of Liddell, who had been cajoled into allowing a meeting to be held in Christ Church hall. "He gave me pretty clearly to understand that it was solely on Aberdeen's account. He thawed a little after twenty minutes over tea, but I thought him very appalling." This sort of thing was daunting, but Drummond's heart, though troubled, was not broken until he realised the fury of the rival sects—Church against Dissent and the still more bitter conflict of High Church and Low Church. His letters show how sick he was of the whole boiling of them, but especially of the Evangelicals, whose assumption of a kind of private property in him entitling them to order him about was too much for his Highland blood. A tall fellow with red hair and bright eyes is not to be trifled with, however smooth his manners may appear. He had with some pain emancipated himself from the religion of phrases which is called cant, and it was with unspeakable disgust that he found that at Oxford he was expected to observe it. He seems to have spoken his mind with some freedom. "I had no idea", he says, "that it would be part of my work here to run a tilt against the evangelism

current in the place, but nothing is more needed. . . . I have told the Low Church men to repress themselves entirely, but to work behind the scenes to any extent. To the latter our ways of work, our leading ideas, the absence of cant and of evangelical formulas are a complete revelation, and I really think they will adopt them." We may take it that he thought nothing of the kind, but like a decent fellow he had to say so.

Drummond's discomfiture at Oxford did not discourage him from pursuing the "students' movement", which to the end of his life remained his principal concern, but it made him reflect to some purpose. He quietly withdrew from drawing-room meetings. Feminine adulation, though quite agreeable, did not seriously interest him and he now knew its limitations and dangers, not to himself as a man (women were never dangerous to Drummond) but to his ministry. When three years later he consented to give a second Grosvenor House series, the announcement mentioned that owing to the limited accommodation available men only would be admitted! It was an adroit move and its results confounded his enemies. Had Drummond been the kind of man that Jowett and Liddell in their worldly wisdom took him for, his reappearance at Grosvenor House would certainly have been a fiasco; yet working under stringent limitations and without any of the lure of novelty that had helped him before, he achieved a success that was

quite as spectacular and much more solid than that of 1885. On each of the three Sundays, according to a contemporary newspaper report, "the great square room was densely crowded by an interested and representative gathering—politicians, clergymen, authors, artists, critics, soldiers and barristers, with a large sprinkling of smart young men, whose appearance would scarcely have suggested a vivid interest in serious concerns". The addresses—"Evolution and Christianity", "Natural Selection and Christianity" and "The Programme of Christianity"—had all Drummond's faults in full measure, but their matter and the manner in which they were received prove that both he and his audience were quite convinced that he had something to say, even if neither he nor his audience seemed to know in precise terms what that something was. Drummond's detractors were in a dilemma. If he had something to say, some new and profound religious message for his generation, *cadit quaestio*: he was entitled to his audience. If not, then the fact that none the less he could exact the respect, even admiration, of men like Arthur Balfour, George Curzon, Alfred Lyttelton, G. W. E. Russell and J. E. C. Welldon, excluded the idea of a superior mountebank, and argued a great and triumphant personality.

By this time, however, testimony to the quality of Drummond's personal power was really superfluous, for during 1885 and 1886, to all seeming,

the Grand Old Man himself was chained to his chariot—a supreme spectacle from the point of view of the 'eighties. “To all seeming” one must say, because it is difficult to speak absolutely of Mr. Gladstone’s behaviour at any time, and quite impossible in the case of the years 1885 and 1886. The two men had met but their personal contacts had been of the slightest, and as Gladstone through all his long life had never shown himself subject to personal enthusiasms it is unlikely that at the age of seventy-six, and thoroughly *rusé*, he should develop one for a young and inexperienced man of thirty-four with whom he had nothing in common save a sincere belief in the Christian religion, a profession of Liberal principles and a strong regard for Lord Aberdeen. The last was the only common ground that presented any substance, for as to the second Drummond was a Liberal for no better reason than that in his time the Labour party had not been invented, and as to Christianity one really hesitates to bracket the author of *Natural Law* and the author of *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* as professors of the same religion. The aged statesman, during his brief recess from office in 1885, had been making himself ridiculous by his controversy with Huxley about the Book of Genesis, and Drummond had felt it his duty to say so in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century*. But when, in February 1886, the odious article appeared, Mr. Gladstone had for the moment lost interest in

Moses. He was forming his first Home Rule administration and was in no mood to quarrel with a brilliant young man who not only had gained the ear of the general public but was known to have great influence with an important and wealthy section of Scottish Liberals whose attitude at this juncture was a source of considerable anxiety to the Liberal party. If Drummond could make these people swallow Evolution and the Higher Criticism he could make them swallow anything—even Home Rule. In the circumstances it was expedient to leave his heterodoxy to the safe determination of Judgment Day and concentrate on the immediate business of securing his support for the Government's Irish policy. This proved comparatively easy, though it did not work out quite as Mr. Gladstone had proposed. Drummond's adoring friend, Lord Aberdeen, had gone to Dublin as the Home Rule viceroy, and almost his first act was to beg him to join the Viceregal staff. If Drummond had had anything of the adventurer in him, now was his chance. Having regard to the personal relations that subsisted between him and Lord Aberdeen the offer was tantamount to an invitation to become the power behind the Viceregal throne, and, had he chosen, not even the presence of Morley as Chief Secretary would have prevented him from becoming the virtual ruler of Ireland. But he did not choose. He sent Lord Aberdeen a good-natured but perfectly firm refusal

with a disclaimer of ambition which is almost touching in its sincerity and artlessness. "For Mrs. Grundy, I do not care, I hope; but for others, for the students and for those to whom one may yet speak of a Spiritual World, one would like to avoid even the appearance of ambition. Is it not so?" It may have been an element in his reluctance that his mind about Ireland was not yet made up, but his doubts could not have been serious, for when two months later he paid a flying visit to Dublin he went not only as the Viceroy's guest and intimate but as one of the Prime Minister's secret agents. When he returned, with John Morley bearing him company and in close converse with him across the channel, his enthusiasm for Home Rule and his confidential report on the state of Irish feeling left nothing to be desired. The natural consequence was that the Liberal assault on Drummond's integrity was renewed with a violence that few men could have resisted. The Whips' Office thrust seats upon him. Most of them were reasonable certainties which he had no hesitation in declining, but there was one where the odds against were heavy that gave him serious trouble. This was the Partick Division of Lanarkshire¹, of which the sitting Liberal member, relying on an estimate of the constituency that was admittedly sound, had gone Unionist. Partick included the whole of the

¹ Now, since 1918, a division of Glasgow.

new West End of Glasgow as well as a working-class district that was notoriously Orange, and a Gladstonian victory there would do much to steady the tottering fabric of West of Scotland Liberalism. It was believed that Drummond, and Drummond alone, could achieve it. Unheard-of efforts were made to induce him to stand. The local Liberals were frantic in their entreaties. They invaded his house and had almost to be driven by force from his doorstep. The Whips were clamorous in their solicitations. Gladstone himself wrote a pressing letter. But Drummond would not be moved. "What little I can do as regards the present crisis," he wrote to Gladstone, "I think I can do to equal purpose apart from the House of Commons, and, in the long run, for the good ends, of which this is but a part, I believe that by working in the fixed walk of life which seems to be assigned to me, and which refuses, in spite of private struggles and the persuasion of the wisest friends, to release me for this special service, I can do more for every cause of truth and righteousness." After the General Election—during which he punctually observed his promise to work for "the cause" and incurred plenty of odium thereby—Drummond put politics out of his life. In the autumn he was hard at work addressing students' meetings at Bonn, where he hoped to make a beginning of the extension of the "students' movement" to the German universities. It does not appear

that he made any deep impression, but he was happier there than at Oxford: he could speak the people's language.

During the eight years of active life that remained to him Drummond went serenely along the solitary path that he had chosen, neither avoiding nor courting publicity, as gracious and winning and light-hearted as ever, but perfectly detached. To all the world he presented the vision of the happy man—the man who can do what pleases him in the way that pleases him and enjoys every moment of it. He gave the second series of Grosvenor House addresses of which mention has been made. He laboured unceasingly at his beloved students' movement—a quixotic task that involved a voyage round the world. While in Australia he was successfully tempted to make a quasi-political excursion to the New Hebrides. In 1894 he published *The Ascent of Man* (being the Lowell Lectures delivered by him at Boston in the previous year) and refused the principalship of McGill University, Montreal. His career was over. In the same year the first symptoms appeared of a malignant disease of the bones. He died at Tunbridge Wells on March 11, 1897, after more than two years of intense suffering, which he bore not only without complaint but with the same gaiety and playfulness that had endeared him to his fellows in the days when to have imagined Henry Drummond as a helpless pain-racked cripple would have

seemed like a denial of the decencies that even a godless universe must recognise.

It was observed at the beginning of this study that in the history of Henry Drummond there are mysteries at every turn. Was he a man of genius *manqué* or did he fulfil his destiny? Was there substance in the reputation he enjoyed in his lifetime or was he merely a delightful illusion? Was his rôle of religious teacher the only one possible or, in refusing to enter politics, did he make the Great Refusal and justly incur the oblivion that descended upon him as soon as his body was laid in the grave? Or was that oblivion but the triumph of some malignant deity that had determined that his story should remain half-told? Those who care to speculate upon these questions may find it most profitable to approach them by starting with the last. Of the oblivion there is no doubt. To-day the mention of his name awakens only a faint and broken echo in the memories of men to whose ears forty years ago it came like the call of a celestial clarion. To younger men it conveys nothing at all. Even among Drummond's surviving intimates it is to be feared that the man has been forgotten and his place taken by a sentimental legend, beautiful to those that like such things, but untrue. Its untruth is due to the singular fact that Drummond, though he could command unlimited adoration, never made a disciple, the result being that in their passionate

desire to exalt his personality his friends have conspired with his enemies to decry the worth of his written words. "Drummond was far greater than his books", exclaims Sir George Adam Smith, his friend and pious biographer, and, in a sense that one can easily appreciate, it may be true; but in the only sense that really matters, the sense of succeeding generations, it is profoundly false. Nothing is easier than to convict Drummond's two considerable books, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* and *The Ascent of Man*, of shallowness and inconsistency, to explode their logic, sniff at their science, and deride their artless notion that the life of the universe is a rough but interesting and, on the whole, honourable game. If one applies metaphysical canons it is quite impossible to make head or tail of Drummond's doctrine, to reconcile *Natural Law* either with itself or *The Ascent of Man*. Monism and pluralism, rationalism, mysticism and empiricism jostle one another in his pages in the most bewildering fashion. Sometimes he is Hegel, sometimes Huxley, sometimes Herbert Spencer; in *The Ascent of Man* he curiously anticipates William James, both in matter and manner. But what his friends did not appreciate was that without these vaguenesses and incoherences that troubled them he could never have made the appeal to his time that he did. The situation, of course, looks clear enough now. For a generation or more science had been

sapping the foundations of conventional evangelical Christianity. There were many men who were aware of what was going on, but they had been content, like Jowett, to observe it from the fancied security of a college window with a malicious anticipation of what fun it would be when the crash came. In the 'eighties the crash did come, and no doubt it provoked Olympian laughter to see the poor souls, awakened from a troubled sleep, scurrying about and cutting the most diverting capers. But the poor souls who groped in darkness and confusion naturally had no sense of humour, and they were glad when they heard a voice from the ruins proclaim with youthful confidence, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you". Drummond himself had experienced the collapse of the old fabric, but to his joyous boyish spirit that was untroubled by doubts either of logic or of life it was no calamity but a glorious adventure. He would preach the unity of the Gospel of Christ with scientific truth, and he was so enamoured of both that it took him years to discover that, hidden in the bosom of his doctrine, there was a dualism that all his fine words and happy analogies had not resolved. As *The Ascent of Man* shows, he did not despair of resolving it, but there are many indications, both in that book and in his various published addresses, that, had he lived, he would have ended, like men who were greybeards when he was born, by accepting

frankly the position that spiritual truth and scientific truth lie in different universes and that the whole duty of the honest man is to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's. This is what the average man of the 'eighties, who read a little and thought occasionally, wished in his heart to believe. He wanted to hear somebody who would save his soul without insulting his intelligence, and in the author of *Natural Law* he got what he wanted. Drummond, for all his interest in "spiritual diagnosis", had little insight into the souls of individual men, but he was extraordinarily sensitive to the way that men in general were thinking, and by his gift of expressing their perplexities, which he himself felt, he helped to solve them. If to-day plain men can contemplate a Christianity purged of miracle and superstition, it is to Henry Drummond more than any other man that the credit is due.

The final mystery of Drummond is his personality. He was apparently the most charming and most exasperating of men. He was handsome, infinitely amusing, imperturbable (except perhaps at Oxford), fond of simple but expensive pleasures like travelling and deer-stalking, and—a trait that many people could not abide—always dressed to obvious perfection. Apart from clothes his æsthetic perceptions were poor. He collected bad pictures and bad curios. He read comparatively little and showed no taste in

what he did read—he mentions Longfellow and Bret Harte among his particular admirations. As to music, he could tolerate, though he may not have liked, Sankey's hymns. He never married, and never excited even the whisper of a love-affair, which was the only respect in which he failed to earn the nickname of "The Prince" bestowed upon him by the admiring young men who regarded his study as a presence chamber. It is difficult to think of such a man as an artist, but an artist he was in two respects—his mastery of the expository style in writing and his consummate art in addressing what is called a cultured audience upon a religious subject. In the former he has had few equals and no superior. In the latter he stands alone. No one has even attempted to imitate him.

These were notable but far from being supreme gifts. What was behind it all, what was the balance that eludes us after we have summed up the whole account of good looks, good clothes, good temper and goodness generally, and which made men who knew him say, "Drummond was unique"? Was it some rare and subtle ingredient of the soul, or was the secret that he guarded so cunningly, withal so involuntarily, the lack of something that ordinarily goes to the making of a man? Was he the Galahad or Lohengrin that his friends saw, or was he merely Peter Pan in a frock-coat and whiskers, whose influence over men consisted in

no more than his capacity to appeal to the boy that sleeps in every man's heart? A good case might be made out for the latter interpretation. He was as light-hearted and forward looking as a boy, because, like a boy he never saw very far forward. He had a boy's implicit belief that in order to be adventurous it is not necessary to be unconventional. He had a boy's generosity, a boy's affections, a boy's sensitiveness and a boy's callousness. There is a famous article on errand-boys that he wrote for *Good Words* in support of the Boys' Brigade, a passage from which may be quoted as illustrating both his understanding of the boy mind and the easy felicity of his style.

The boy is accounted for by the Evolution Theory. His father was the Primitive Man. It is only his being in a town and his mispronunciation that make you think he is not a savage. What he represents is Capacity; he is clay, dough, putty. This boy cannot as yet walk straight, or dress better, or brush his hair. He is not good. He is not bad. He has no soul. He has not even soap. He is simply Boy, pure, unwashed, unregenerate Boy. . . .

The real boy-nature in them has never been consulted. You may be a very remarkable man, but it is not their kind of remarkableness, so you are a person of no authority in their eyes. You may be a walking biblical cyclopædia, but they have no interest even in a stationary biblical cyclopædia. They believe you to be a thoroughly good fellow in your way, only it is an earth's diameter from their way; and that you should know precisely what their way is they guilelessly give you opportunity of learning every single second you spend among them.

These words were written of street boys, but what master in a public school would demur to

their universal truth? Drummond knew the boy as only one could who had the boy within him very much alive and kicking.

Yet the boy-hypothesis of Drummond breaks down at the most important point. It does not account for that very un-boyish characteristic, the steely reserve in which he sheathed his spirit and which no persuasion of interest, ambition or love would prevail with him to put off and show what manner of man he really was. Therefore he would take service under no man's banner, but lived as a knight-errant and died in his armour of proof.

“SMITH O’ AIBERDEEN”

“ A feckless crew, no worth a preen,
As bad as Smith o’ Aiberdeen.”

R. L. STEVENSON.

“ And whan we chastened him therefore,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore
As set the warld in a roar
O’ laughing at us ;
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail and potatoes ! ”

BURNS.

THE greatest British scholar—“ the cleverest man in Great Britain”, according to Wellhausen—and greatest Scotsman of his generation died in 1894. Eighteen years elapsed before his biographers could complete their task. The delay, as they observe, had the advantage of enabling them to present their subject in an historical perspective that would not have been possible while the emotions and animosities with which Robertson Smith’s name had been associated in his lifetime were still active and painful. That is true in the sense that old passions have long since burned out, but it is still impossible for any Scottish writer to approach the subject without a degree of feeling that his pen—if a truthful one—must betray. For, from the Scottish point of view, Robertson Smith remains and will remain

an extremely discomfoting memory, calling up more humiliating reflections than are consistent with moderation and decency of language. If Smith had simply been scandalously and wickedly served by his fellow-churchmen, it would neither be so bad nor so difficult to explain. His penitent fellow-churchmen would have the perennial comfort of sackcloth and ashes, and all would be well. Sins do not worry the sinner overmuch. A grown man, if he be in good health, will break every Commandment (except possibly the Sixth) and sleep and eat none the worse. What poisons his soul at bed and board, and even drives him to suicide, is humiliation—the memory ever nagging at him of some imbecile act which no repentance can wipe out, no impulse excuse. So with Robertson Smith and the Free Church of Scotland. He was not burned at the stake: he was not cast out of the synagogues: he was merely obliged to leave a chair in which his gifts were wasted and to exchange Aberdeen for Cambridge. Few heretics have fared better. But the Free Church got no comfort from a moderation that put it in a false and ridiculous position in the eyes of the whole world. It made a half-hearted sacrifice of Smith to pacify a vindictive minority. It maintained no principle. It proclaimed nothing but its own pusillanimity, laid down nothing but its own dignity. In retrospect the course of action that seemed at the time so prudent and statesmanlike appeared

in its true character of a piece of unredeemed silliness for which repentance was vain and atonement impossible. No wonder, then, that Scotsmen still feel a certain nausea of spirit when the Robertson Smith case is recalled. Even the Established Church, which was not directly concerned, does not care for the subject, for there is the awkward fact that certain fathers and brethren of the Establishment, animated by a Christian zeal to discredit the rival institution, exploited the "heresies" of the Free Church professor for all they were worth.

The Robertson Smith case was the last, the most dramatic and the most impressive of the three great battles between traditional and modernist theology, the others being the *Essays and Reviews* controversy and the proceedings against Bishop Colenso. In the earlier engagements the heretics had reconnoitred the ground well before offering battle, and the big battalions of orthodoxy, chagrined and discomfited, left the field to the jeering strains of Psalm cxxiv., chanted by the rebels from the security of a Privy Council judgment. It was with exultation, therefore, that the orthodox throughout the United Kingdom learned that the next battle was to be fought in Scotland. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills," they cried, "whence cometh my safety." For in Scotland there was no Privy Council to shield heretics from the wrath of the righteous, and the Scots, above all

people, could be depended upon to deal faithfully with anyone who laid an unhallowed hand on the Ark of God. In order to see exactly what ground orthodoxy had for its confidence, it is necessary to understand something of the constitution and history of the Church to which Robertson Smith belonged and its temper and situation in the 'seventies.

I

Scottish Presbyterianism, unlike English non-conformity, dates from the Reformation, and no less than the Church of England, though on different grounds, affirms its continuity with the historic Church catholic. But whereas in England the breach with Rome was first and foremost a political act—the consummation of the policy of reducing all jurisdictions into the possession of the Crown—in Scotland it was an extension of the Continental Reformation to which the Crown was bitterly hostile. The Kirk thus began its career in an attitude of antagonism to the State, which later events served only to intensify and render permanent. The curious result followed that a Church which rejected with peculiar violence the faith and obedience of Rome was obliged in self-defence to retain Rome’s ecclesiastical philosophy and to reaffirm it with ever-increasing vehemence. The doctrines of Hildebrand were adopted without scruple and, embodied in such resounding catchwords as “non-intrusion”,

“spiritual independence” and “the Crown Rights of the Redeemer”, were enjoined to be believed on peril of perdition.

On such a view, of course, a Church Establishment was possible only on the basis of a concordat, and a concordat was at last reached in the Revolution Settlement of 1690. It did not fulfil the Scottish ideal of a Church and State bargain, which was that the Church should get all the benefit while the State shouldered all the burden ; but it was a much better bargain than any Protestant church had a right to expect. The fact that an intransigent minority refused to be included in it was all in its favour, and if it had been left well alone the problem of the Scottish church would have been solved for ever. Unfortunately, soon after the Union, the united Parliament of Great Britain re-introduced lay patronage in Scotland. Friction ensued, and before long there were two serious secessions from the Establishment. But the Establishment, now basking in the serene light of the eighteenth century, was unperturbed and presently was able to observe with amusement the spectacle of the zeal of the dissenting brethren expending itself in internal quarrels and mutual excommunications. The nineteenth century brought this placid temper to an end. “Moderatism” fell into a decline, the Evangelical party gained control of the General Assembly, and the claims of the ecclesiastical power were revived in the

most extreme form. In 1838 a bold attempt was made to abolish lay patronage by the legislative authority of the Church, but was frustrated by an appeal to the civil courts on the part of the aggrieved patrons. A long and embittered struggle followed, in which the Kirk did not improve its position by unfrocking those ministers who chose to obey the law as laid down by the civil courts. The Government was hotly pressed to redress the “grievances” of the Kirk, but Peel was not the man to yield to ecclesiastical arrogance, and said plainly that he was not going to ask Parliament to grant the Church of Scotland an authority that it had denied to the Pope of Rome. There being no help for it, the Kirk as a whole was disposed to accept the situation and hope for better things. But the “non-intrusion” party, numbering about a third of the ministry and a like proportion of the laity, was irreconcilable. It seceded from the Establishment, proclaimed itself the “Church of Scotland Free” and proceeded to duplicate the organisation of the Established Church in every parish. This was the Disruption of 1843, which has been so praised and magnified that in many Scottish minds it ranks as the most important event in the history of Christianity since the Day of Pentecost. The only comment that need be made here is that the leaders of the Disruption were men of courage, energy and parts, but were neither as wise as serpents nor as harmless as doves.

In spite of its apparent unity the Disruption was far from being a homogeneous movement. It contained a diversity of motive, temper and direction that later embarrassed the policy of the Free Church. Head and shoulders above all the other Disruptionists was Thomas Chalmers, a man of teeming brain, furious energy and imperious moody temper. To a capacity for organisation that amounted to genius he added the dangerous gift of an eloquence that in an age of eloquence was regarded as incomparable. He was admittedly the most brilliant figure in the Church of Scotland. He had played an active but by no means dominant part in the 'Ten Years' Conflict, and his sudden appearance on the eve of the final crisis as leader of the non-intrusion party has always been something of a mystery. He was far too able and politic a man to go into the wilderness for the sake of an abstraction. He was not deeply religious, if indeed he was religious at all. By nature a sceptic, he found the passion of his life in natural science and economics. While still a young man he had made his name as a bold and original economic thinker, and he had had the vision to foresee the economic and social dangers of the industrial revolution. It may be said without injustice, therefore, that Chalmers cared little about the freedom of the Kirk *per se*, but cared a great deal about having an organisation that he could direct according to his own will and make the instrument of his

ambitious projects for dealing with the problems of industrial poverty. He duly fashioned the instrument but died before he could use it. His social programme died with him. One good thing he did achieve that was maintained—the raising of the standard of professional education for the ministry. This had important results.

Chalmers’ lieutenants were more or less inspired by his ideals, but there was a darker element in the enthusiasm of the Disruption that could not be disregarded—an element of blind and malignant reaction. There were men like John Kennedy of Dingwall and James Begg, who left the Establishment quivering with passion at the State’s recalcitrance and animated by nothing but the hope of a Canossa. They looked forward sincerely and confidently to a new Establishment in which the civil power would be the obedient servant of the Church for the enforcement of the most rigorous Calvinism; and anything that threatened the realisation of their ideal had their bitterest opposition. These men were not loved, but they were heartily feared, and at any crisis they could always rally timid and conventional orthodoxy to their side.

But the most difficult problem of the Disruption leaders was the heterogeneous character of their general following. There was no parish in Scotland in which the Free Church failed to find recruits, but its particular strength was drawn from the industrial areas and the High-

lands. The former were of prime importance, in fact it was their support that made the Disruption practical politics. With all respect for the ministers who "came out" in 1843 it is permissible to suggest that their exodus has been painted in colours unduly heroic. Certain initial sacrifices were inevitable. Some temporary inconvenience and even risk of privation had to be reckoned with ; but on the whole it cannot be said that the seceding ministers suffered much financial loss or ever supposed that they would. Chalmers, an adept financier, had carefully examined his resources beforehand, and he was satisfied that he could carry with him the bulk of the new industrial and mercantile plutocracy and could dip his hand deep enough into their bulging pockets to make good the loss of teinds (tithes) and endowments. The result was that within a surprisingly short time the Free Church ministers found themselves installed in churches and manses not much inferior to those they had surrendered and drawing equally good stipends. Naturally, the givers of these good gifts had to be considered. To keep them in humour, to flatter their pride and conciliate their prejudices, was accepted, therefore, as the first rule of sound Free Church economy. For when the golden calf really has brought you out of the land of Egypt it is decent (as well as prudent) to give it worship.

If the Lowland towns were the Free Church's assets, the Highlands were its chief liability and

an exceedingly heavy one. In the Highlands the Disruption was embraced with the enthusiasm which the natives of that part of Scotland had never failed to show for anything that savoured of rebellion against State authority. A poverty-stricken and backward population dispersed over a wide area produced numerous and needy congregations that had to be supported out of Lowland abundance. The Highlanders accepted the bounty in the spirit of caterans levying blackmail. They considered that their piety—which manifested itself chiefly as bigotry and insolence—entitled them to extort all the money they could from the well-to-do who professed regard for pure religion. Although their adhesion to the Presbyterian order was comparatively recent, and their whole outlook and religious temper were foreign to the historic Kirk, their zeal for orthodoxy was immense; and the grandsons of the men who, a century earlier, had marched in what every pious Presbyterian regarded as the legions of Antichrist, now had the effrontery to pose as the special guardians of the Ark of the Covenant. In the General Assembly, where their geographical distribution secured them a representation out of all proportion to their numbers, they were vocal and truculent. Any policy that did not accord with their views was met with threats of schism. As schism was a thing to be avoided at all costs, the second article in Free Church economy was to keep the Highlands quiet.

There were, then, three attitudes of mind represented in the Free Church. There was first the great mass of wealthy middle-class religion, which was mainly concerned that its pious fads should be consulted and was even prepared to be tolerant so long as it was not frightened. In the Assembly the representatives of these people formed a sort of "Government" party—that is, within limits they could be manipulated by the clerical junta that ruled the Church. The permanent opposition consisted of the "constitutional" or reactionary party, mainly Highland, but able to count on occasional and substantial assistance in the lobby from the more timid members of the Lowland majority. The third attitude of mind was the tradition of active theological scholarship established by Chalmers. It was embodied in no party, and its very existence as a separate influence was unsuspected until it suddenly emerged with disconcerting force in the early 'seventies.

At that time the constitutionalists were in great feather. For thirty years they had been an army in retreat, but they had stubbornly contested every inch of ground and lately they had won an important rearguard victory. Dr. R. S. Candlish, Chalmers' successor as leader of the Church, wished to bring about a union of all the dissident Presbyterian bodies. In addition to the Free Church there were three of these. By far the most important was the United Presbyterian Church, which represented the two secessions

from the Establishment during the eighteenth century. It drew its main support from the substantial *petite bourgeoisie*. It was a large and flourishing body, and, having no parasitic congregations, paid handsome stipends and always had money in hand. Most Free Church people had no fault to find with the U.P.’s except a smack of vulgarity—deplorable no doubt but not entailing damnation. But the constitutional faction, led by James Begg, detected something much worse—unsoundness of doctrine. Did not the U.P.’s repudiate all civil establishments of religion as unscriptural, and had they not begun to show an alarming weakness for hymns and instrumental music in the public worship of God? Congregations in remote Highland glens learned with horror and indignation that the Free Church was being invited to join itself with a body that actually tolerated an organ in one of its churches, though it had not yet fallen so low as to allow the abomination to be played.¹ From Assembly to Assembly the dust and din of battle filled the air, and ultimately Candlish had to acknowledge defeat. So far as the United Presbyterians were concerned his scheme of union was wrecked for a generation. All that was achieved was the absorption in the Free Church of two minor bodies to whom the constitutionalists took no

¹ The offending instrument had been erected in Claremont Church, Glasgow, as far back as 1856, but its use was interdicted by the U.P. Synod. “Howbeit the high places were not removed”, and after a silence of twenty years the organ was at last heard.

exception, because their tenets were as narrow as their own and they could be trusted to support the good cause.¹ The triumph was complete. The constitutionalists had waited on the Lord and the Lord had renewed their strength.

II

Such was the scene in the year 1876, when the Robertson Smith drama opened. Let us turn to the protagonists.

William Robertson Smith, Professor of Oriental Languages and Old Testament Exegesis at the Free Church College, Aberdeen, was a young man not yet thirty, but even so he had occupied his chair for six years. Theological professorships are the only permanent dignities to which the Scottish minister can aspire and are in consequence much coveted. They enjoy an almost episcopal prestige, and naturally they fall as a rule to men of mature age whose scholarship, or some part of it, has survived the ordeal of long years of pastoral work. Robertson Smith, therefore, was an exception,² and if the Free Church had possessed a tithe of the worldly wisdom which it afterwards so foolishly tried to assume,

¹ The Reformed Presbyterians (or Cameronians) and the Original Secessionists. The former represented the intransigents who refused to accept the Revolution Settlement. The latter were a remnant of the Secession Church who had not entered the United Presbyterian body. Small rumps of both bodies still exist.

² But not an isolated one. T. M. Lindsay (1843-1914), father of the present Master of Balliol, was appointed Professor of Church History at the Glasgow College in 1872. He was Robertson Smith's devoted friend and advocate.

it would never have elected a youth of twenty-three fresh from the schools. But to their credit the majority of the fathers and brethren were compelled by Smith’s extraordinary attainments. Extraordinary, indeed, is the mildest word one can use. It may be the loving exaggeration of a mother that has given “book” as the first word he articulated, but there is no doubt about his amazing precocity. He never went to school, but he had the best of tutors at home in his father, Dr. William Pirie Smith, Free Church minister of Keig, Aberdeenshire, who had been a schoolmaster before the Disruption. When fifteen years of age he went up to Aberdeen University, where he swept all before him. He was Ferguson Scholar in mathematics—a Ferguson Scholarship is the highest distinction the Scottish student can win—but nothing would induce him to go to Cambridge or shake his determination to enter the ministry. This was a disappointment to many of his friends, especially to Tait, who as one of the examiners for the Ferguson Scholarship, had seen in Smith a mathematician and physicist, not merely of distinction but of genius.

Smith later accepted Tait’s invitation to become his assistant at Edinburgh University, a position which he held for two years,¹ and which,

¹ Papers written by Smith while assistant to Tait include one on “Electrical Stream-lines” which Prof. Chrystal has described as a classic, and a brilliant scientific polemic entitled “Hegel and the Metaphysics of the Fluxional Calculus”, which provoked a heavy reply from Dr. Hutchison Stirling.

among other interests, made him acquainted with Robert Louis Stevenson as a pupil who regarded the physical laboratory as a suitable forum for theological discussion. But meanwhile he had begun his theological course at New College, and the mathematician was being eclipsed by the scholar in a manner that left his instructors dumb with astonishment. In 1867 he went to Bonn for the summer semester, dividing his time there between theology and mathematics. In 1867 he was at Göttingen, hearing Lotze and Ritschl and adding the latter, as he afterwards added Wellhausen and Lagarde, to the list of his admiring teachers. There was nothing that he undertook of which he did not immediately become a master. His mind seemed to be the most perfect intellectual machine ever designed by the Almighty for the equipment of a mortal. It absorbed, co-ordinated, generalised, transmuted and re-created knowledge with incredible swiftness, and every process was informed with the exactitude and candour of the mathematician. It was precisely this mingling in him of the mathematician with the scholar that made Robertson Smith so hard to deal with. The heart of the typical scholar is a nest of doubts. Smith's Edinburgh master in Oriental studies, A. B. Davidson, is a good example. He doubted everything, and then doubted his doubts. Not so the pupil, to whom knowledge was nothing if not dynamic and projective, and facts were interesting mainly as

material for inferences. To say that Robertson Smith had no love of knowledge for its own sake would not be true, but clearly he regarded a knowledge that exhausted itself in the act of knowing as hardly worthy of the name. This habit of looking at everything as an equation to be solved could not fail to create an impression of intellectual arrogance which he aggravated by his virtuoso displays of masterful dialectic and ready wit. His enemies, starting full of confidence—he was such a little fellow, so young and so frail-looking that easy victory seemed certain—presently found themselves, so to speak, reeling back to the ropes under a hail of dialectic blows. It was all very gallant and wonderful, and gained Smith hosts of admirers, but it was not always good policy. In a way his aggressive intellectualism overreached itself. His orthodox adversaries were not men to be easily daunted, and defeat only provoked them to renew the assault with intensified bitterness. They could not now attack him as an impostor, but they could say that he had sold himself to the Devil. They did not put it quite so crudely, of course, though once or twice they came very near it. What they said was that he was far too clever to be good, and everybody knows what a deadly charge that can be. Lest anyone should imagine that there was in it this substance, that Smith’s interests were primarily intellectual and that religion held a secondary place in his life, let it

be remembered that in order to undertake the ministry of the Church he had renounced a career in which his intellectual gifts would have found full satisfaction and certain success. He was in fact a profoundly religious man, and this not in any vague sense, but according to the evangelical faith which he never forsook. It is true that in Germany he had found it necessary to abandon the old standards and adopt those of Ritschl for the justification of his evangelicalism. But that was an intellectual affair, which he never would admit had anything to do with the substance of his religious belief. He was an evangelical; he had been brought up as an evangelical; he would remain an evangelical; and any suggestion, whether by enemy or friend, that he was anything else infuriated him. A curious instance of this occurred when the agitation against him was at its height. Principal Tulloch, an amiable and far-seeing man, wrote an appreciative article on Robertson Smith's work for the *Contemporary Review*. Smith took the first public occasion to make a singularly ungracious reply to the tune of *non tali auxilio*. Why? Because Dr. Tulloch belonged (*a*) to the Establishment and (*b*) to the Broad Church group thereof. No, Smith would row in the same galley with Wellhausen, Ritschl and Kuenen, but not with a "Moderate". *Tantaene animis!*

So much for the controversial aspects of Robertson Smith. For the rest, he was, as has

been said, a tiny little chap, dark-haired and dark-eyed, of swarthy, almost Oriental complexion, lively and merry as a grig, and a famous judge of wine and tobacco.

Although the reactionaries were for the most part Highlanders, their acknowledged leader was a pure-bred Lowlander of “Cameronian” extraction. James Begg, minister of Newington Free Church, commonly styled “Doctor” in virtue of a degree conferred by the Lafayette College, Penn., in recognition of his adamant orthodoxy, was born near Airdrie in the bleak uplands of Lanarkshire. The region that extends twenty miles to the east and south of Glasgow is now covered by the West of Scotland coalfield, and its population has been changed by industrial immigration, but Begg belonged to the old native stock, the surliest, coarsest and most fanatical in Scotland. He was typical of the breed, a man of mean intellect and little culture. Some good qualities he had—courage, tenacity, a shrewd business head and a rough clownish humour that enabled his sorely tried obituary writers to describe him as “genial withal”. He also had some pulpit gifts, and was a forceful, though not acute, debater. But he was a truculent and vindictive bully whose influence in the councils of the Church was won and maintained by a system of terrorism and coarse intrigue. His callous contempt for the ordinary decencies was shocking even to those who shared his bigotry.

He had been Moderator in 1865, when he achieved the distinction of being rebuked by the Assembly for profanity in his address from the chair.¹ As a pushful, money-making Lanarkshire farmer Begg would have done well and might have passed for a useful member of society ; but as an ecclesiastic it does not appear that he ever in all his ministry of fifty-odd years devised or did anything but mischief. In the Assembly he had two zealous lieutenants — Dr. John Kennedy of Dingwall, a pulpit saint of great repute in the Highlands, and Dr. Horatius Bonar, whose celebrated hymns breathe a meekness and Christian forbearance that are less noticeable in the reports of his Assembly speeches.

The "leader" of the Church was Robert Rainy, Principal of New College, where he also held the chair of Church History. His lectures, it is said, were apt to be perfunctory ; but no man can attend to everything, and Rainy, who enjoyed that serene indolence of temper that so often marks the statesman, did not bother himself much in trying. He must have known that in any case his students could learn far more

¹ On the motion of Lord Dalhousie (Fox Maule) it was ordered that the offensive passage should be excised from the printed version of the address. But Begg's bigotry did not prevent him from marrying into an Anglican family. His first wife was Maria, daughter of the Rev. Ferdinand Faithfull, rector of Epsom, and sister of Emily Faithfull. Their son, Ferdinand Faithfull Begg (died 1926), was for many years a prominent member of the London Stock Exchange and was Unionist M.P. for the St. Rollox Division of Glasgow, 1895-1900.

ecclesiastical history from his example than from his or anybody else’s precepts. For nobody ever both played and looked the part of the ecclesiastical statesman to greater perfection than Rainy did. He had a noble head with exquisitely clear-cut features that in old age acquired an almost angelic beauty. His demeanour was composed and charming in a degree that is not often found in Scotsmen. Nothing, whether good or evil, ever perturbed him, and no occasion of severity—and he could be severe—ever betrayed him into a trace of passion, though, when necessary, he could always suggest that he felt deeply on the matter in question but preferred to leave it at that. His mind for affairs was like a garden spider’s web, both capacious and subtle, and on the whole justified the claim of his admirers that, man for man, there was little to choose between Rainy and his far cousin Gladstone.¹ The comparison is just, not only on the credit but also on the debit side. Thus Robertson Smith, who had occasion to study Rainy’s manœuvres with painful interest, came to hate him as Parnell in similar circumstances hated Gladstone. He called him a “Jesuit”, which was not fair either to the Society of Jesus or the leader of the Free Church.

¹ To be precise, Rainy was the son of Gladstone’s fourth cousin, Dr. Harry Rainy, Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at Glasgow University. Their common ancestor was a seventeenth-century Highland laird, Gilbert Robertson of Kindeace. Rainy and Gladstone were both of mixed Highland and Lowland descent, but in Rainy the Highlander predominated.

“Casuist” would have been the more appropriate term, for Rainy was Gladstone’s equal in the art of making fine verbal distinctions to which he attached extraordinary, sometimes comic, importance. “Then we omit that?” said somebody once at a committee meeting, referring to a controversial clause in a draft document. “No,” replied the old man, “we shall simply not include it.” There was much truth in the sneer of the hostile newspaper which spoke of “the curious mind of Principal Rainy worming like a corkscrew through material soft enough to be perforated by a chisel thrust”. It is easy to censure his tortuousness, and it was only natural that its occasional victims should be bitter about it, but if he had not been tortuous he would have been unfit for the task imposed upon him, which was to preserve the Free Church in being until the sense of corporate unity should supersede the spirit of controversy in which it took its origin. From the ecclesiastic’s point of view the situation in the ’seventies was extremely anxious. A fatal schism had only been averted by the abandonment of Candlish’s union policy, with the result that the authority of the “direction” of the Church had been badly damaged. It was the first duty of the new leader *cunctando restituere rem*. When the attack on Robertson Smith began Rainy knew little and cared less about the merits of his young Aberdeen colleague’s case: what he did care about was that he should not be

manœuvred into a general engagement with Begg and his dervishes. Dominated by that consideration he failed at the outset to see that Robertson Smith had introduced an entirely new element into the situation, and when he did appreciate the true state of affairs, it was too late. He was already committed to a policy that was bound to end in ineptitude and discredit.

Only two more personal references need be made. According to Free Church practice the leader’s chief of staff was always a Glasgow minister charged with the special duty of keeping Glasgow and the industrial West in order. In 1876 this position was held by Dr. John Adam, minister of Wellpark Free Church, Glasgow, a capable but somewhat domineering man. Lastly, there was the Rev. Sir Henry Wellwood Moncreiff of Tullibole, tenth baronet, Principal Clerk of Assembly. This highly respectable personage enjoyed a great prestige for various reasons. He was one of the small band of the old nobility and gentry that the Free Church had managed to detach from the Establishment. He belonged to a family that had produced a whole dynasty of Scots judges and was himself a perfect master of Scottish ecclesiastical law and procedure. In virtue of his official position he was an influential member of the “direction” of the Church, which was a great source of comfort to the reactionaries, whose principles he shared, however much he might dislike their tactics. Generally he might

be described as a typical “squarson” of the best sort—a narrow-minded, level-headed, honourable man, with a marked antipathy to poachers and heretics.

One of the remarkable things about the outcry against Robertson Smith is that it was not raised sooner. In his inaugural lecture in 1870, “What History teaches us to seek for in the Bible”, he had made it plain that he had adopted and intended to teach the results of the German Higher Critics. At that time Scotland was in the grip of the most rigid Protestant scholasticism, of which the literal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture was the cardinal doctrine. German theology was known only by hearsay as an abomination—*non nominandum inter Christianos*, much less to be examined at first hand. One would have expected, therefore, that the proposal of a Free Church professor actually to teach the accursed thing to candidates for the ministry would have raised a storm at once. But nothing happened. Robertson Smith taught peacefully for more than six years, during which time his reputation as a scholar grew rapidly. He was invited to take part in the two most notable works of combined scholarship then going forward—the Revised Version of the Old Testament and the great ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The editor of the latter—Professor Baynes of St. Andrews—offered him the assistant editorship, which Smith eagerly accepted. He wrote the

article “Angel” for vol. ii., and for vol. iii. the article “Bible”. As neither contained anything that he had not taught for six years as a professor, he had no reason to suppose that the expression of his views in a work of reference would make any difference, any more than he had reason to suppose that Principal Brown of Aberdeen, who knew all about his lectures and had seen his articles in proof, would afterwards be one of his most active accusers. “Angel” passed unnoticed, and for some months it seemed as if “Bible” would do the same. But by an evil chance the *Edinburgh Courant* sent its review copy of vol. iii. to Dr. A. H. Charteris, Professor of Biblical Criticism at Edinburgh University, who at once turned to the article “Bible”. Charteris was one of the younger divines of the Established Church, but he was the very embodiment of orthodox pietism, and “Bible”, with its implied acceptance of the Graf-Wellhausen theory of the Pentateuch, shocked him exceedingly. It was some months before he could master his indignation sufficiently to be able to write, but at last, in the *Courant* of April 16, 1876, his review appeared. It told the whole horrid story, and lest it should not be horrid enough, eked it out with a couple of subtle misquotations from the article and asked what the Free Church proposed to do about it.

The answer the Free Church cabal would fain have given was the right one, “Nothing. Mind

your own business." But there was always Begg. That champion of Christendom was already bellowing a "Fee, fi, fo, fum" that froze the official marrow. Charteris's wretched review having appeared on the eve of the General Assembly, Begg at once let it be known that he would invite the Venerable Court to consider what manner of man it had appointed to the chair of Hebrew at Aberdeen. Agonised deprecations followed. It was represented that there was a standing committee of Assembly charged with the duty of watching the life and doctrine of the professors, and that constitutionally no action could be taken until that body had made full inquiry and issued its findings. As this was undoubtedly the case, Begg graciously consented to hold his peace for a season on the understanding that the College Committee would proceed with all dispatch. A respite indeed, but one of that miserable sort that the blackmailer gives, well knowing how he can exploit it.

The lot of the College Committee was not a happy one. The sinister shadow of Begg brooded over their deliberations. On every official occasion he asked with deepening menace in his tones what progress had been made, and received evasive replies. The committee consisted of men of all shades of opinion. Some sympathised with Robertson Smith, more did not. But all were agreed that a heresy hunt was to be avoided, if possible. For a heresy hunt is always a messy

business. If it succeeds, the heretic is apt to be regarded as a martyr, which is inconvenient; if it fails, those who have promoted it get nothing but bad eggs and dead cats, which is deplorable. The committee were very much alive to these considerations. On the other hand, if there was no heresy hunt what would Begg do, or rather what would he not do? He was more dangerous than he had ever been before, for it soon became apparent that he could muster not only the usual “Highland host” but most of the white-haired Disruption doctors, and as it was unlikely that the Lord would require the souls of all these robust old gentlemen in the immediate future, a mere policy of playing for time did not promise much. Rainy’s own mind was soon made up. Judicial action against Robertson Smith must be avoided, but the ground could be prepared for suitable administrative action.

In the carrying out of this policy the first person to whom Rainy turned for help was the culprit himself. In a friendly and informal way it was suggested to Robertson Smith that he might apologise—nothing abject, of course, just a civil reassuring letter to the College Committee. This was what is vulgarly called a “try-on”, a procedure which with ordinary men will frequently give the desired results. But Smith was not an ordinary man. Being both acute and courageous he uttered by way of reply the one

word that Rainy most dreaded—"Why?" The dilemma thus handed back was indeed perfect. Smith, having been invited to apologise, was entitled to know in precise terms what his offence was, but Rainy could not satisfy him without greatly increasing the risk of a heresy trial.

Had Smith rigidly maintained this initial attitude of "no charge, no answer", the College Committee would have had no option but to face up a rough house from Begg and Co. and report that no action should be taken. But just at this juncture Smith made his only blunder, and it was a bad one. A pamphlet entitled *Infidelity in the Aberdeen Free Church College* appeared. It was the work of a person of no importance who, with that shrinking from publicity that makes good deeds doubly meritorious, had not put his name to it. So paltry a production should have been beneath Smith's notice, but he, with the *Courant* review still rankling, got the idea that it was a new outrage on the part of Charteris. He dashed off for the press a long, brilliant, angry reply on that hurried assumption. He ought to have known that Charteris, though he had culpably misquoted Smith's words in his review, was incapable of anything so mean, spiteful and ignorant as the "Infidelity" pamphlet. It was a mistake that enabled his enemies to say that this eminent Higher Critic, when put to a simple test, showed himself a very poor judge of authorship. Smith sent a proof of his letter to Rainy,

with the naïve suggestion that it should be accepted *pro tanto* for the purposes of the College Committee’s inquiry! Rainy’s only comment was a despairing groan. The letter, with all its indiscretions, was published, and at once Edinburgh was in an uproar. The reactionaries howled for Smith’s blood. One of those social pests known as popular preachers saw a chance too good to be missed, and harangued crowded congregations on “Have we a Bible?” The College Committee would have to do something. Under pressure from Begg a sub-committee was appointed to examine the articles “Bible” and “Angel”. Not content with that, Begg made a scandalous attempt to intimidate the Committee by means of a carefully packed “public meeting”. Smith protested that a fair inquiry was impossible if such things were tolerated, and it was with some difficulty that he was pacified. However, he submitted a statement of his views on Biblical criticism, but in spite of all Rainy’s blandishments and artifices he refused to be drawn into any admission, apology or quasi-apology.¹ The upshot of the College Committee’s deliberations was a report to the effect that there was no ground for a heresy

¹ Rainy even wrote to Robertson Smith’s friend, Professor James Candlish, who was also a member of the College Committee, suggesting that he should get Smith to write to him (Candlish) a suitable letter of which he (Rainy) enclosed a draft! Rainy, like Becky Sharp, was apt to underestimate the intelligence of ordinary mortals. The letter would have deceived nobody.

process against Professor Robertson Smith, but that in the article "Bible", more especially in his treatment of Deuteronomy, he had, though not intentionally, used language "of a dangerous and unsettling tendency". Smith's rejoinder to this was the counter-check quarrelsome: he wrote to the editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* proposing to reiterate his views in detail in a separate article on "Deuteronomy".

The College Committee's report was received by the Commission of Assembly in March 1877, and on Rainy's motion it was referred to the Presbytery of Aberdeen to consider what was "the safe and right and reasonable thing to do". Now the Presbytery of Aberdeen liked Robertson Smith, partly because he was an extraordinarily likeable young man and partly because they were proud of him. He was in every sense one of themselves. Most of them had known him all his life. Whatever qualms some might feel at his Higher Critical notions, all appreciated that it was a great score for Aberdeen that the son of an Aberdonian manse should command the respect of European scholarship. He was *patre docto filius doctior*, and there was the impressive fact that Dr. Pirie Smith, whose orthodoxy was above suspicion and who had given up more than most men at the Disruption, was his son's loyal comrade and sagacious counsellor. Being bound, in the pedantic Scottish phrase, to "obtemper" the instruction of a superior court, the Presbytery

debated fitfully for two months. Nobody showed much enthusiasm except Principal Brown who, to atone for years of laches, evinced a sudden anxiety for sound doctrine and assumed the rôle of *advocatus diaboli*. The worthy man’s discretion was nil, but no Buzfuz could have excelled him in his zeal for the personal interests of his client. Professor Robertson Smith’s treatment of Deuteronomy was bad, he declared, but not so bad as his treatment of the Devil. Would fathers and brethren believe that the article “Angel” made not a single reference to the reality and personality of his client who, orthodoxy apart, was in common decency entitled at least to a cross-reference *vide SATAN*?

But the spirit of Gallio was upon the Presbytery of Aberdeen. Even the sorrows of Satan failed to move it, and when the General Assembly of 1877 met on May 24 there was nothing to report but progress. It seemed that the Venerable Court would not for the present be troubled with the Robertson Smith affair. But such comfortable expectations were not to last. They were dissipated in the very rudest manner by the appearance of Robertson Smith himself demanding to be tried for heresy.

III

It was a bold as well as a youthful move. Some say it was a bad one, and so it was in the

sense that it was "bad for the coo", the "coo" in this case being Rainy. All his diligent scheming to avoid the perilous scandal of a heresy trial had been set at naught. But it was not in his nature to admit defeat before the end of the game. Something could still be done. There was a maze of legal procedure to be gone through in the course of which it might be managed that the heresy hunters should lose their way. The difficulty was Sir Henry Moncreiff, who was determined that if he could help it they should not. The old lawyer had been restive under Rainy's temporising policy. Now that it had failed he felt free to take his own line, and that was to secure that the trial should end in a conviction. Robertson Smith's action, therefore, was doubly successful. It embarrassed his enemies by obliging them to formulate their charges; and by splitting the official clique and thus resolving the official party into its elements, it created for the time being an entirely new alignment of parties in the Assembly. The issue was no longer liable to be obscured by considerations of ecclesiastical policy. The way was cleared for a straight fight between liberalism and reaction. This was exactly what Smith wanted. Altogether the immediate consequences of his demand to be put on trial were highly gratifying except in one respect—it involved his suspension from teaching. Curiously enough he had not foreseen this, and it surprised and vexed him.

However, he was never downcast for long, and presently he was cheered by various assurances that if Scotland cast him out England would be glad to have him. One that amused Smith a good deal seems to have come from Jowett through a third party—a suggestion that if the worst came to the worst he could easily sign the Thirty-Nine Articles and get the next vacant Balliol living !

As it turned out Smith had need of all his leisure. He was his own lawyer, and in the nature of the case his defence required above all things technical skill. In those days Scottish ecclesiastical libels still followed the old Scottish form of criminal indictment, which was more logical, less simple and quite as verbose as the corresponding English document. The general scheme was a syllogism—the major proposition reciting the charge, first generally (abstract major) and then in detail (particular major), the minor proposition setting out particulars of justification corresponding to the particular major, and the conclusion alleging the guilt of the accused and demanding judgment. On being served with the libel the accused might put in an answer objecting to its “relevancy” in law, which had to be disposed of before issues of fact could be tried. In Smith’s case the only questions of fact were the authorship and publication of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* articles, which were of course admitted. In the English phrase, therefore, the case had to be fought on demurrer.

Smith had plenty of time to survey the ground before being called upon to put in his answer. The wretched Presbytery of Aberdeen who had already spent futile weeks arguing about him now had the vexation of preparing a heresy libel thrust upon them. At first Principal Brown and his group thought nothing could be easier. Smith had rejected the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy; to reject the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy was to say that the Scriptures were not always what they professed to be, and that was to deny their Divine inspiration. At the last step of the reasoning a doubt crept in. What precisely was "inspiration"? Nobody could say. The Westminster Confession, which was the standard by which Smith had to be judged, was exasperatingly vague on the subject. It only said that the Bible "contained" the word of God, and Smith, the slippery rogue, had never said it didn't. It is said that a Scottish ecclesiastic once outwitted the Devil by setting him to spin ropes out of sea sand. If so the Devil got his own back with interest by working off Michael Scott's trick on Dr. Brown and the Free Presbytery of Aberdeen. Poor Dr. Brown! Though a clumsy advocate, he was a conscientious one, and deserved better treatment from his client. The Presbytery met in June, and delayed consideration of the matter till August. After two months a draft libel was produced and sent to the Procurator of the Church for approval. The

“abstract major” charged Smith, *inter alia*, with “subverting” the doctrine of inspiration. The Procurator struck out “subverting” and substituted “contradicting”. The amendment nearly reduced Dr. Brown to tears. “Subvert”, he wailed, was a nice vague word with lots of prejudice in it, but “contradict”—why, it was making a present of the case to the accused. The anti-Smith party contemplated their creature with disgust. It was a vast document with a brave outfit of whereases and aforesaid, albeits and yet-true-it-is-and-of-a-verities, but in its bloated body there was no health.

However, one has to make the best of things. Something might be done with the alternative charges. In addition to (1) “contradicting” Smith was accused generally of (2) “tending to contradict” the doctrine of inspiration, and (3) “by neutrality of attitude and rashness of statement tending to disparage” the divine authority and inspired character of Scripture. In particular it was alleged that he had taught: *Primo*, that the Levitical system was not a Mosaic institution. *Secundo*, that Deuteronomy was not the historical record that it professed to be. *Tertio*, that the sacred writers were liable to error in question of fact and occasionally sacrificed accuracy to party spirit. *Quarto*, that some parts of Scripture had the character of fiction. *Quinto*, that the Song of Solomon was a love-poem and devoid of spiritual significance. *Sexto*, that New

Testament citations were not conclusive of the authorship of the Old Testament books. *Septimo*, that the prophets were merely men of spiritual insight and had no supernatural revelations of the future. *Octavo*, that the reality of angels was a matter of assumption rather than of direct teaching in the Scriptures. By his answer the pannel (defendant) pleaded that the first general charge was not borne out by the particular allegations, and he objected to the second and third general charges as constructive and embarrassing.

The hearing of the objections extended over six months, during which time Robertson Smith showed a capacity for advocacy that would have made his fortune at the Bar. His opponents looked on helplessly while the Presbytery under his adroit persuasions struck out clause after clause with monotonous regularity. By the end of February the first charge, having not one of its eight legs left to stand upon, had collapsed. In March Smith met with his first reverse, the Presbytery by one vote overruling his objection to the "tendency" charge. He appealed to the Synod of Aberdeen. When the Synod met in April it was evident that the Robertson Smith affair was entering a new and, from the orthodox point of view, very disquieting phase. The gallery was unusually well filled by the general public, who cheered the appellant when he got up and sat down, and whose enthusiasm was unrestrained when on a division there was again a

majority of one, but this time in Smith’s favour. Clearly the heretic had not only had the best of the argument so far, but had the mob at his back as well. A few days later the “neutrality” charge vanished, never to be heard of again. For the time being Smith’s victory was complete.

The reactionaries’ only hope now was that something in the way of salvage might be done in the General Assembly where, of course, Smith’s personal influence counted for less than it did in his own presbytery and synod, and where Sir Henry Moncreiff, unlike poor Dr. Brown, could be trusted not to bungle things. Still, the conditions were not so good as they might have been. Smith was already becoming a popular hero. His triumph in the inferior courts of the Church was bound to have a serious moral effect with the waverers and trimmers; and to make matters worse the great Begg was under a nasty cloud, having lately been discovered in a discreditable intrigue of which the object was the return of himself and party to the Established Church. As for Rainy he was inscrutable. He had made one or two public utterances of sibylline darkness, and there was a rumour that since last Assembly he had been “reading up the Scripture question”, but what his line would be could not even be guessed.

The Free Church General Assembly of 1878, departing from custom, met in Glasgow. A notorious reactionary, Horatius Bonar’s brother

Andrew, filled the Moderator's chair, but his party would much rather have had him on the floor of the House, for he was a very fair Hebraist of the old school and, though a lame and unpleasing speaker, possessed great personal influence. Less talented than his brother, he was, in popular esteem, even more of a "saint". (Children were named after him, including one who became Prime Minister, which shows what a good name can do.) But instead of fighting the good fight Dr. Andrew Bonar had the uncongenial task of seeing that everybody got fair play within the limits prescribed by Sir Henry Moncreiff. For according to Presbyterian practice the effective ruling of proceedings lies, not with the Moderator, who is more or less of a *roi fainéant*, but with the Principal Clerk; and as that functionary plays a deliberative as well as an official part and is at perfect liberty to take sides, the side to which he is opposed has a poor chance of succeeding on any point of order it may be foolish enough to raise.

Sir Henry was sensible of these advantages. Like many strictly honourable men he had a callous conscience where prejudice was concerned. As against a person like Robertson Smith procedure could be rigged without scruple. *Primo* and *secundo*, in obedience to his ruling, the Assembly took together. Parties having been heard *pro* and *contra*, the good Sir Henry, with a fine show of impartiality, moved that *primo* be

dismissed (for the very good reason that the particular averments did not support it), but that *secundo* be allowed subject to an amendment which introduced some new matter carefully calculated to prejudice the accused. The English reader may gasp, and say, “Can such things be? How can one alter an indictment after the accused has pleaded to it?” The answer is that Sir Henry Moncreiff dated from the eighteenth century and eighteenth-century Scots lawyers took no stock of such trivialities. It is significant, too, that the Assembly as a whole saw nothing monstrous in his proposal.

Rainy, however, protested in language of unwonted vehemence. To him it was doubly offensive. Not only was it profoundly shocking to his sense of justice—for, with all his subtleties, Rainy was in essence a just man—but it was a gross affront to his supposed leadership. Sir Henry had acted on his own initiative, without consultation or even warning, and evidently expected the Assembly to acquiesce in the outrage. For the first and only time in his life Rainy had to fight on ground not of his own choosing. There was no help for it. Defeat would be bad, but surrender would be ruinous. He moved that the appeal be dismissed *simpliciter*. The speech in which he did so was perfect in its kind. While freely granting the excellence of Short (*alias* Sir Henry) he exposed many subtle and compelling reasons for the Assembly to

conclude that Codlin (*alias* Rainy) was the friend. He used, in fact, every art and persuasion of the Parliamentary leader who seeks to win a majority that he cannot command. His smooth and studied words did not conceal the fact that he was straining every nerve to avoid defeat. Fathers and brethren were profoundly thrilled. They had assembled looking for lively times, but this ecclesiastical cock-fight surpassed the most sensational expectation. The excitement grew until the Puckish little figure who sat at the Bar was forgotten save as a symbol, the infuriating abstraction over which the conflict raged. The House divided. By a small majority the appeal on *secundo* was allowed. Rainy's bid for a vote of confidence in his ability to deal with the Robertson Smith case had failed. The defeated leader could not conceal his chagrin.

When the Assembly met in the evening to consider the remaining appeals the anti-Smith party were glowing with confidence. They reckoned quite justly that having won on *secundo* they could not possibly lose on *tertio*, to which the same considerations applied with even greater force. Besides, Rainy had had his quietus : he would not stand up to be knocked down again. The pannel would be left to fight his own battle with what help he could get from a few halfling minister lads and maybe a thrawn elder or two. In such hybriistic temper did orthodoxy unloose all its rhetoric, winding up with a blood-curdling

speech in which Begg warned the Assembly that the eyes of all Scotland were upon them and that the righteous were trembling for the Ark of God. Robertson Smith replied. Save for a word he was seen to scribble on the back of an envelope while Begg was up, he spoke without a note. His vindication was complete. Long before he had finished the crashing salvos of applause that marked the close of one brilliant period after another told the reactionaries that they were beaten, and when Smith, turning passionately towards Begg, reminded the House that one man only is recorded as having trembled for the Ark of God—“Eli, an unworthy priest”—the defeat became a rout.¹ Fathers and brethren shivered with delight, like small boys who see the school bully getting his head punched. Presently they poured into the lobbies openly declaring their admiration of Smith’s prowess and their anger at the trickery by which they had been duped into voting against him at the morning session. The appeal on *tertio* was dismissed by a two to one majority. The remaining appeals were incontinently abandoned, for Smith had stampeded the Assembly and scattered the redoubtable Highland host like chaff.

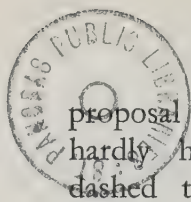
Amid the general hubbub Rainy remained unmoved, surveying the scene of confused

¹ The contemporary newspaper reports give “Eli, a worldly ecclesiastic”, but there is ground for suspecting that the passage was toned down for publication. I have used one of the several versions that are current orally.

enthusiasm with a keen and calculating eye. Sir Henry's usurpation of the leadership had been a disastrous fiasco, and there was now a good chance for the rightful leader to regain some measure of control. He moved, therefore, that consideration of the "tendency" count be deferred to next Assembly, subject to an order for its amendment in a form prescribed by him. A wearied Assembly agreed without discussion. The hypothetical count was to charge Smith with the publication of writings which "by ill-considered and unguarded setting forth of speculations of a critical kind tend to awaken doubt, especially in the case of students, of the divine truth and inspiration of any of the books of Scripture". Obviously this was not a charge of heresy at all, but merely a complaint that Smith was not a suitable person to hold a chair, and none knew that better than Rainy. It was a pure device whereby the Assembly could be switched off the heresy track back to administrative action. Smith did not see that. In the flush of victory and the innocence of his young heart he imagined that Rainy and Moncreiff were now separated by an inextinguishable hatred and that the former had no option but to march as the submissive ally of the triumphant liberals. The delusion was shared by his comrades, so much so that as the year wore on and the Assembly of 1879 drew near, James Candlish, mildest of men, felt bold enough to send Rainy a kind but firm ultimatum. He

represented that Rainy must, in view of his recorded dissent, agree that the matter of *secundo* should be reopened and the Assembly given an opportunity of quashing the whole libel. If, for lack of due guidance, the Assembly should fail to do so and should pass even an implied condemnation of the Higher Criticism, then the liberals, who were numerous and influential, would be in an untenable position and would be driven out of the Church. Whereat Rainy, in delicate mockery, asked what Candlish meant by addressing him. “In this matter”, he wrote, “I am emphatically not the leader of the Free Church. Sir Henry Moncreiff holds that position.” As to *secundo*, that was *res judicata*, however deplorable, and could not be reopened. But he was quite sensible how disastrous it would be if the Free Church, for want of guidance, should commit itself to a condemnation of liberal theology; that had been his view all along. Therefore it would be for the liberals to consider whether for the sake of the cause they had at heart and for the peace of the Church they should not consent to sacrifice Robertson Smith. True, the removal of Robertson Smith from his chair would not satisfy the extreme reactionaries, but it would deprive them of all power for mischief. Otherwise the heresy process, with all its risks, must take its course.

It was clear from this that Rainy was working for a reconstitution of the official front. His



BROTHER SCOTS

proposal was indignantly rejected—he could hardly have expected anything else—but it dashed the enthusiasm of his young liberal friends to find that in trying to dictate to Rainy they had played into his hands as beautifully as he could desire.

None the less Robertson Smith faced the Assembly of 1879 in the highest spirits. He had just returned from a long joyous holiday in Egypt and Syria to find that in his absence his fellow-citizens of Aberdeen had elected him a member of the School Board by a majority that staggered Dr. Brown and the other “old gentlemen” who had moved heaven and earth to keep him out. Even before he left the tide of popular feeling had been racing furiously in his favour. His appearance on any public platform was the signal for frantic cheering. Whenever the distracted Free Presbytery met to consider how to carry out the instructions of the General Assembly, the galleries of their hall were invaded by a mob of students and the general public who demonstrated noisily on every occasion, cheering the accused, hissing the accusers and deriding the pathetic appeals of the Moderator for order and seemliness—reprehensible behaviour, no doubt, but very heartening. A less intoxicating and more respectable satisfaction was afforded by the decisions which the Presbytery reached in these trying circumstances. The amended “tendency” charge was eviscerated just as the

“contradiction” had been by all the particular allegations being struck out. As to the wretched *secundo*, tossed to and fro like the grinning sailor in *Ingoldsby*, the Presbytery after hours of wrangling over Sir Henry’s precious addendum gave it up as a bad job and sent it back to the General Assembly with a polite request that the Venerable Court might please to be intelligible.

The position was now really farcical. Three years had elapsed since Robertson Smith had begun to vex certain of the Church. Two years had elapsed since he had invited them to indict him for heresy—two years spent in confused intrigue, miscellaneous backbiting and general bad temper, at the end of which the prospect of bringing the culprit to book was farther off than ever. The futility of it all was a powerful argument for the proposal which Rainy now submitted, that the Assembly should abandon the heresy proceedings and appoint a special committee to inquire into the whole matter. But “the old gentlemen”, as Smith with the blithe arrogance of youth called his enemies, were not yet in a mood to yield. After much manœuvring and consultation it was decided that the appeals on the “tendency” charge offered no hope to fainting orthodoxy. They must concentrate on *secundo* for what it was worth. In virtue of the faith by which mountains may be removed it might be possible to convince the Assembly that the Galilean Carpenter attached

great importance to the Mosaic authorship of the book of the Law discovered by Hilkieh. Andrew Bonar, the previous year's Moderator, was chosen as the most suitable vessel to convey this doctrine (Sir Henry Moncreiff being unwilling to expose himself personally to a second rebuff), and he was so far successful that in a House of over 600 members he carried his point by a single vote.

A result so even of course produced a crisis, but Rainy was not dismayed. Crises were his *métier*. With profound satisfaction he noted that the Moncreiff-Begg coalition was doomed. Poor Sir Henry had completely lost his head, was talking wildly and doing one stupid thing after another. Presently he would see how foolish he had been. Robertson Smith had already proved himself the better lawyer, and his ingenuity was by no means exhausted. He had the Presbytery of Aberdeen under his thumb. There would be a new sheaf of dilatory pleas and maddening technicalities got ready for the next Assembly, on realising which the prodigal Clerk would humbly return, and doubtless the slaughter of the fatted calf—Robertson Smith, to wit—could be arranged.

The subject of these calculations now began to realise the danger. So long as Rainy held his hand he was safe, but he knew that Rainy would not hold his hand for ever. It was only a question of the opportune moment for striking. In the

circumstances, Robertson Smith had to consider whether it was worth while continuing a struggle that was wearing out his health and could at most only postpone the inevitable end. He was fighting now not for his own position, but for the sake of his friends—Candlish, Davidson and Lindsay—who, it was well known, would be the next to suffer, but it was doubtful if he could serve them further. There was a great deal to be said for quitting the arena if any honourable occasion for doing so should arise. At this juncture the chair of mathematics at Glasgow University fell vacant. Smith after some hesitation became a candidate, but, not having the support of Kelvin, he was unsuccessful—on the whole to his relief. Thenceforward, though he had several tempting offers (including two from Harvard) he never wavered in his resolve not to go out until he was put out.

He spent the winter (1879-80) in the East, exchanging his black coat for a burnous, and forgetting Robertson Smith of Aberdeen in Abdullah Effendi of Jeddah. The Emir of the Hejaz was his good friend and enabled him to make a rather daring journey to Taif. From Arabia he went back to Egypt to join Richard Burton for an expedition to Fayum and the Nitrian Lakes. A droll couple they must have made—the gigantic swashbuckling soldier and the little minister from Aberdeen who, if the dragoon is to be believed, spoke the better Arabic.

The pleasant days in the desert came to an end. In the spring of 1880 Robertson Smith was once more under the bitter Scottish sky. During his absence Rainy's plans had matured. With the diligent Dr. Adam as his go-between he had come to an accommodation with Sir Henry Moncreiff. He put its basis very simply and cynically. "If we sacrifice the man", he said, "they must sacrifice the libel." The reverend baronet was sad but resigned, for he saw no help for it. The Presbytery of Aberdeen had again proved recalcitrant. The heresy trial looked like going on until Judgment Day. Rainy had been right after all; the only way to get rid of Robertson Smith was by administrative action. And so the deal was concluded. Moncreiff was to remain in titular charge of the case but he was to carry out Rainy's policy. If Begg would signify his agreement, the business was as good as done. If not, they could probably do without him, as the moral effect of the leaders' *rapprochement* would go far towards securing a comfortable majority in the Assembly. Against such a move Smith could do nothing but appeal to the public conscience. This he did and very effectively, as the fresh burst of pamphleteering proved—by means of an open letter in which he charged Rainy with meditating a violation of the law, civil as well as ecclesiastical. But Rainy did not care. From his own observation he was satisfied that Edinburgh would support him,

and Dr. Adam had assured him that Glasgow was pretty safe. Therefore to Smith’s open letter he sent an exquisitely phrased private reply, full of courtesy and good feeling, that could not have been bettered by any most humane Mikado who had determined on something lingering with boiling oil in it.

When the Assembly of 1880 met the Rainy-Moncreiff accord was officially declared by the agenda. By way of saving Sir Henry’s face the Venerable Court was to be invited to find the libel against Professor Robertson Smith “ripe for probation”, but the ripe fruit, being of the Dead Sea variety, was not to be plucked. Instead of instructing the Presbytery of Aberdeen to proceed according to law, the Assembly was to summon Robertson Smith to the Bar and consider what was to be done with him. If that were carried—which it was, the Assembly being anxious to get to an issue—Sir Henry was to propose that the Rev. William Robertson Smith, having forfeited the confidence of the Church, be deprived of his office of Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages.

The stage was now set for what in the language of the evening press are called the “closing scenes”. There was every promise of an exciting finish. For one thing, it was known that Begg, *idem infensus*, had refused to follow Sir Henry and would insist upon the libel, the whole libel and nothing but the libel. For another, Robertson

Smith was showing signs of strain and had signalled the opening sessions of the Assembly by a savage onslaught on Sir Henry Moncreiff, who had borne it like the Christian gentleman he was, being aware that he richly deserved it, for had he not committed the gross impropriety of publishing a pamphlet entitled *The History of the Robertson Smith Case*,¹ the only purpose of which could be to prejudice the accused?

The motion for Smith's deprivation was set down for Thursday, May 27. Shortly after six that morning there was an unwonted activity in the thoroughfares leading from the New Town up the Mound to the Assembly Hall. Students, who in those days were little plagued by the razor, were early on the spot, yet found themselves anticipated by a sedate procession of four-wheelers bearing elders' wives and daughters, complete with summer princess frocks and Leghorn bonnets, who had gallantly sacrificed bed and breakfast to make sure of cheering Mr. Robertson Smith as their great-grandmothers had cheered the Young Chevalier, a little further down the same hill. Long before 10 o'clock, the Assembly Hall, floor and gallery, was densely crowded. The appearance of the panel at the Bar was greeted with tumultuous cheering.

¹ Had it not been for the author's position Smith might safely have ignored the pamphlet, for it is so tedious and pedantic as to be wellnigh unintelligible. It displays great learning in ecclesiastical law, Anglican as well as Presbyterian precedents being discussed exhaustively, but no appreciable sense.

Begg, making his way to his usual seat on the “opposition” side, bore good-naturedly enough a chorus of laughter and facetious noises contributed by young gentlemen who were pursuing theological studies. When Rainy entered there were hisses.

The first incident was provided by Smith, who objected to the Assembly’s procedure as grossly irregular, refused to plead and walked out of the House. This was awkward, but there was no help for it. With a wry face Sir Henry Moncreiff moved that Mr. Robertson Smith be deprived of his professorship. Dr. Laidlaw, a member of the pro-Smith party, moved what amounted to a direct negative. The debate was in the doldrums until Begg got up. Begg was astonished. Begg was grieved. Begg was indignant. What, sentence a man without trying him! Words could not express the infamy of it. Would the Assembly of the Free Church betray the principles for which Hampden had died? Perish the thought. . . . And so on, and so on. Derisive bursts of applause from the divinity students in the gallery punctuated Begg’s impassioned appeal for justice—a shameless performance that made Rainy and Moncreiff thoroughly miserable, which was its main purpose. Lastly, there was a motion in the name of the doyen of the Assembly, Dr. Beith,¹ who proposed that the Assembly should admonish Professor

¹ Great-grandfather of Major Hay Beith (Ian Hay).

Robertson Smith to beware of publishing "unguarded and incomplete statements" and let the matter rest there. Dr. Beith's great age, the esteem in which he was held by all, and the fact that having been identified at first with the orthodox party he had revised his opinions in no uncertain fashion, ensured that his motion would command a large measure of support, and the pro-Smith party decided to concentrate upon it. The old man was so infirm that he could not appear, but by leave of the House the speech he had prepared was read by his son, Mr. Gilbert Beith, M.P. It was a mild, grave speech, without a hard word in it, but as a condemnation of Rainy's doctrine of expediency and "the peace of the Church" it was unanswerable. Begg's vigorous, if dishonest, invective had made the official clique look ridiculous. Dr. Beith's censure exhibited them as paltry shufflers. It became clear that though the Rainy-Moncreiff motion might get votes it had no friends.

The debate dragged on all day and far into the night. Past midnight a wearied Moderator, whose lace ruffles had long since lost their morning freshness, rose to put the question. As there were four motions three divisions were necessary. Dr. Beith's motion was carried first against Dr. Begg's and then against Dr. Laidlaw's. Lastly, it was put against the official motion for Dr. Robertson Smith's deprivation, and the real struggle began.

The result, as it happened, was determined largely by the manner in which divisions are taken in the Scottish General Assemblies, which is the opposite of the Parliamentary method—that is, members are counted as they pass *out* of the House *into* the lobbies. Hence it often happens that cautious members hang back until they see how the division is going before deciding how they will vote or whether they will vote at all. It is a system admirably contrived to falsify the sense of the House and to suit the convenience of faction leaders. Dr. Begg took full advantage of it. Officially he and his party could take no part in the final division, as they were opposed on principle to both motions. But on one thing they were resolved—Robertson Smith must go, if not by their way then by Rainy’s way. So presently Begg left his seat and ascended the railed-in dais on which stood the Clerks’ table, whence he could take stock of the situation. From time to time he signalled to members of his party to go into the lobby for the official motion. At length he returned to his place. The pro-Smith party were all in the lobby, but the supporters of Rainy and Moncreiff were still crowding through their door. Begg and Kennedy chatted affably. The gallery in deep dejection watched the tellers checking their figures at the table and wondered what the majority would be. Suddenly, in full view of the scandalised Sir Henry Moncreiff, one

of the tellers for the Beith motion waved his hat. . . .

It was a strange gust of passion that swept over the Mound that summer night. Packed into the sombre low-roofed Assembly Hall were some two thousand of the staidest and most convention-ridden human beings it would have been possible to find in Victorian Britain, who had been listening for fourteen hours to a debate on the questioned historicity of Deuteronomy, and when they learned that Deuteronomy had been beaten they went mad. From the gallery came every kind of din of which frenzied men and women are capable—cheering, shrieking, even sobbing with delight. On the floor the fathers and brethren of the victorious faction literally danced for joy, wrung one another's hands and yelled themselves hoarse, while orthodoxy and expediency sat in tragic bewilderment.

When at length the figures were read out and it was found that Dr. Beith's motion had been carried by seven votes only, bewilderment gave place to rage, and if the unspoken thoughts of his friends could have killed, Begg would have been a dead man. What had happened was patent to all. Begg had been misled by the delay of the supporters of the Rainy-Moncreiff motion in getting into the lobby—a circumstance that was not due to superiority of numbers, as he supposed, but to the fact that they were older,

fatter and stiffer than the liberals—and he had been too niggardly in doling out his unofficial support. His clumsy attempt at hedging had resulted in a decision that did not in fact represent the sense of the House. On the other hand, the liberals were entitled to make the most of their victory. They could fairly claim that, though slightly in a minority in the Assembly, they represented a majority of the membership of the Church. Amid renewed plaudits Smith appeared at the Bar to receive the mild admonition prescribed by Dr. Beith’s motion. He accepted it gracefully, but not without a touch of irony in the contrition he expressed for “statements so incomplete that even at the end of three years the opinion of this House has been so divided upon them”.

IV

For the brief space of three weeks Robertson Smith enjoyed the perilous bliss of having seen his enemies brought to confusion. Rainy had been humbled to the dust. Sir Henry Moncreiff’s reputation as an ecclesiastical lawyer was in tatters. The terrible Begg had dwindled into a pig-headed old bungler. But the victor was not permitted to fall into the sin of *ὑβρις*. While he was still receiving congratulations from Wellhausen, Cheyne and others, there happened what Begg exultingly hailed as “a marvellous interposition of Providence”. A new volume of the

Encyclopædia Britannica appeared in which the familiar initials "W. R. S." were appended to an article on "Hebrew Language and Literature" that was even more "unguarded" in its statements than the article on "Bible". Had the volume appeared, as intended, in the early spring, all would probably have been well. The fury of the orthodox was then burning so fiercely that a little extra fuel could have made no material difference. But unfortunately Kelvin, who was writing the article on "Heat", was dilatory and publication had been held up. The result was that Robertson Smith was put in a very awkward position. He had accepted the Assembly's admonition and had given an undertaking to walk more delicately in future, yet, within a month, here he was offending in the eye of all the world more grossly than ever. It was now made possible to denounce him, not simply as a heretic but as a man without honour, and his enemies did not fail to exploit this unexpected advantage. On the motion of Sir Henry Moncreiff (who said he had not read the article and did not intend to read it, being well assured of its damnable quality) the Presbytery of Edinburgh decided to request the College Committee to take immediate action. Robertson Smith was in London at the time, attending a meeting of the Old Testament Revision Committee. Innocent as ever, he would hardly believe his friends when they wrote to him that the trouble had broken out afresh. He

protested that he had scrupulously observed his undertaking even to the extent of refusing to write the articles “Isaiah” and “Israel”—a sacrifice surely substantial enough to warrant his good faith. Was it not obvious that the article now complained of had been written many months before and was already through the press before the Assembly met? To this came the awkward rejoinder, why had he kept silence about it? Knowing the state of feeling in the Church, was it not his plain duty to disclose all the facts? Smith’s answer was that it simply had not occurred to him—which, like many an honest answer given in the witness-box, was not convincing.

The last phase of the Robertson Smith case was short and ugly. The allegation of broken faith, flimsy and false as it was to the knowledge of those who used it, served as a screen behind which every abomination of policy, cunning, malice and untruth could be, and were, wrought with impunity *ad majorem Dei gloriam*. Certain of the manifestations were peculiarly vile. One Macaulay, the “popular” preacher who had distinguished himself in the early stages of the controversy, tabled a mysterious demand that the Presbytery of Edinburgh should sit *in camera* to discuss a matter of grave import that was unfit for publication. This turned out to be a study of Semitic totemism, with special reference to the Old Testament, which Smith had contri-

buted to the *Journal of Philology* and which still ranks high in the literature of anthropology. Not being disposed to spoil a good case by making themselves ridiculous, the Presbytery did not warm to Mr. Macaulay's indignation, and the matter dropped; but the incident was typical of the temper in which the second attack on Robertson Smith was conducted. It was no longer a question of condemning a heresy and beating the bounds of orthodoxy. It was the strictly practical business of hewing Agag to pieces before the Lord and making as fine a minced collop of him as was humanly possible—that is to say, very fine indeed. Principle, honesty, common decency might go hang, provided Robertson Smith was turned out of his place. Even Begg was of opinion that the forms of law had become intolerable, and Kennedy of Dingwall preached lynch law without disguise or shame. Highland presbyteries, inflamed by propaganda directed and financed from Edinburgh, showered angry “overtures” upon the Commission of Assembly, demanding instant and drastic action. Prejudice was organised on the grandest scale. No insinuation however mean, no lie however flagrant, was deemed unworthy in the service of the good cause. “What God hath cleansed that call thou not common.” The favourite device—which had been invented by the ingenious Macaulay at an early stage of the case—was to portray the offender as a worthless

fellow whose ruling passions were vanity and a hatred of the Christian religion, and whose pretended learning consisted of impudent plagiarisms from Kuenen. The fact that Kuenen himself had already made an indignant protest against the misuse of his name in no way abashed the defenders of the faith. The lie was simply repeated and amplified. It should have been the duty of the titular leader of the Church to censure these calumnies, but Rainy at this juncture heard nothing, saw nothing and said nothing. The Church had preferred faction to leadership. Well, let them have their fill of it. In God’s good time he would be called in to clear up the mess. Meanwhile matters must take their course. And so when the August Commission appointed a packed committee to examine and report upon Robertson Smith’s latest article, he merely raised his eyebrows, expressed a chilly doubt or two and set sail for America, where he had an urgent and opportune engagement. He was still in America when the October Commission received the committee’s report and took infatuated action.

The General Assembly of 1880 had been pretty evenly divided in opinion. An accident had gained a small majority for Robertson Smith. The Commission of Assembly, which theoretically consisted of the same persons, was bitterly hostile and steadily registered large majorities for strict orthodoxy. The change of attitude is easily explained. The pro-Smith majority at the

Assembly had included a certain proportion of weaker brethren whose quaking legs had carried them with difficulty into the liberal lobby and who now were only too eager to show their penitence. Furthermore, the Begg party, realising the futility of tactics, were now pulling their full weight. Lastly, the attendance at a Commission of Assembly is for obvious reasons apt to be unrepresentative. Country members cannot afford the expense of time and money involved, with the result that the Commission rarely reflects anything but the opinion of Edinburgh. As Edinburgh had definitely aligned itself with the orthodox party, and as money was available to secure the aid of Highland presbyters who were zealous to defend the Ark of God provided their expenses were paid, the attitude of the Commission was a foregone conclusion. Robertson Smith was summarily suspended from teaching, and his case was reported to the next General Assembly for final judgment. It is interesting at this time of day to note the finding of the special committee upon which this interlocutory sentence was passed, to wit: "The general method on which the author proceeds conveys the impression that the Bible may be accounted for by the same laws which have determined the growth of any other literature". But the terms of the indictment were immaterial to a court that had already made up its mind. The Commission's competence to act as a court of first instance was more than

doubtful, but the warnings of the legal members were unheeded. Constitutional forms having so far favoured the accused were now ignored. The Free Church of Scotland reverted to the judicial standards of the sixteenth century. “Show me the man”, said a Scots judge of that date, “and I’ll show you the law,” and the maxim was unblushingly applied to Robertson Smith. The committee’s report, which was in effect an indictment, was concealed from him until he was summoned to the bar to plead to it. His plea of *autrefois acquit* was greeted with an angry uproar, and sentence of suspension was passed forthwith, pending final judgment by the next General Assembly.

Rainy returned from America to find the Free Church in pandemonium. Robertson Smith, though inhibited from teaching, was still free to preach, and he exploited his liberty to the full. There were plenty of pulpits at his disposal, and wherever he went he had crowded and excited congregations. He popularised the Higher Criticism to enthusiastic Glasgow audiences in a series of lectures on “The Old Testament in the Jewish Church”. A newspaper and pamphlet war was waged in which intemperance of language was not confined to one side. Throughout Scotland no presbytery could meet without a violent scene in which reverend gentlemen shook fists at one another and were barely restrained from blows. The pro-Smith party challenged the

legality of the Commission's action. The anti-Smith party wavered between apology and defiance. Sir Henry Moncreiff once more lost his head in a crisis and tried to argue that the Commission had not purported to perform a judicial act, whereby he evacuated a bad position to take up a worse. On the other hand Begg and Kennedy, who a few months before had been all for the strictest legality, were now shameless advocates of lynch-law: "In dealing with heretics", they said, "the Church must not allow itself to be hampered by red-tape". Talk of this kind produced its natural reaction. The laity took alarm, and, especially in the West, rallied to the cause of Robertson Smith in increasing numbers. Poor Dr. Adam, doing his pathetic best to maintain some show of an official front during Rainy's absence, found himself faced with a revolt of influential elders¹ and immediately flew into a passion, which only made matters worse. The elders, who were for the most part men who were not accustomed to take anybody's orders, told Dr. Adam that unless he wanted to provoke a first-class anti-clerical agitation, he had better keep a civil tongue in his head. Altogether the situation was about as ugly as it could be. The official element was thoroughly frightened. Even the Highlanders, for all their bluster, were uneasy. With every day that passed the feeling

¹ This movement was led by Dr. W. G. Blackie, head of the well-known publishing house.

grew that Rainy had better be asked to resume the leadership on his own terms. Overtures were made to which the great man listened with chilling courtesy. He was at one with the brethren, he said, that Robertson Smith should be turned out, and would loyally, though with the deepest regret, co-operate to that end, but he would much prefer that somebody else should lead in the matter. There is no reason to suppose that he was wholly insincere. He was cold, calculating and avid of power, but he was no hypocrite; for hypocrisy argues a vulgarity of mind of which Rainy was incapable. He knew that this time Robertson Smith’s doom was sealed, and he was not in love with the hangman’s job that was now being thrust upon him. At the same time the restoration of his primacy with an implied assurance that never again would it be questioned was the reward, and Rainy was not the man to make a grand refusal.

And so at the Assembly of 1881 the Robertson Smith case was brought to an abrupt and scandalous end. Rainy assured a humble, contrite and obsequious House that in passing the resolutions for Robertson Smith’s deprivation they need not be troubled by the question of legality, inasmuch as the Venerable Court possessed a *nobile officium* or prerogative jurisdiction in virtue of which a professor appointed *ad vitam aut culpam* could be dismissed without any finding of *culpa*. This monstrous doctrine was emphatically disowned

by the new Procurator of the Church, Mr. C. J. Guthrie,¹ who warned the Assembly that it was doing an illegal thing. The warning was treated with contempt—partly because Mr. Guthrie was notoriously an adherent of the Smith party, but more because the Assembly well knew that Robertson Smith would never take the Church to law. The illegal resolutions were carried by large majorities. There was one feature about them of a meanness that is almost comical. Though depriving Smith of his professorship they purported to continue his “emoluments”. This was neither justice nor generosity but a cautious device which it was conceived would protect the Church from a civil action for damages! The only appropriate answer was that which Simon Magus had, and it was given.

Nearly all the rest of Robertson Smith's life was spent at Cambridge, where he did his most solid and lasting work in pure scholarship. For some eighteen months after his deprivation he lived in Edinburgh carrying on his work for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, of which he was now editor-in-chief, and continuing his active Church connection even to the extent of sitting in the General Assembly as a representative elder. But he was no longer happy in Scotland and when, largely through the good offices of Henry Sidgwick and Leslie Stephen, he was offered the Lord Almoner's Professorship of Arabic at Cambridge

¹ Afterwards Lord Guthrie, a judge of the Court of Session.

he gladly accepted. Trinity elected him a member of the High Table and gave him rooms, which he occupied until early in 1885, when he was elected a fellow of Christ’s. In the following year he was appointed University Librarian, a position for which he was rarely gifted and to which he devoted unremitting labour. In 1889 he was promoted to be Professor of Arabic in succession to William Wright. The same year saw the publication of *The Religion of the Semites*, designed as part of a greater work which he was never to complete. For in 1890 his health began to fail, and as time went on he was found to be suffering from a slow but fatal internal malady. He died at Cambridge on March 24, 1894, aged forty-seven.

One cannot contemplate the career of Robertson Smith without a mixture of feelings in which admiration for what he achieved contends with anger at the perverseness of his fellow-countrymen which prevented him from achieving more. Out of all his too short life five precious years were consumed in fighting the wild beasts of reaction, stupidity and expediency—years that by right should have been spent in the advancement of the studies to which he was devoted. “Why all this waste?” is the rueful question. Possibly the answer is that there was no waste. Had he been left in peace Smith might have added much more than he actually did to the volume of pure scholarship, but in his day liberal theology

had more need of champions than of devotees. Colenso and the authors of *Essays and Reviews* had won notable victories, but they had had to vindicate themselves by the law of the land, which the ecclesiastics had loudly complained was not playing fair. A battle had yet to be fought in the open, without recourse to law and with the public as ultimate judge. It was Robertson Smith's destiny to fight this battle single-handed, and to win. His expulsion from his chair, so far from being a defeat, signalled the completeness of his victory, for it was in terms an abandonment by his adversaries of their main objective, viz. the proscription of liberal theology in Presbyterian Scotland. It had no more value than any other act of vindictive *sabotage*. Of Rainy's part in it enough, perhaps, has been said. He, of course, was not in the least vindictive: his strongest feeling against Robertson Smith was impatience. The worst that can be said of him is that he sinned against the light, which according to good authority is as heavy a burden as any man can be called upon to bear. He certainly secured that Begg, Kennedy and Moncreiff should not disturb the peace of the Church during the very few years that remained to them, and when they were gone he was able to put down heresy hunting with a more or less firm hand. But the price of Rainy's peace-making was a loss of *moral* from which the Free Church never recovered. The more cultured

and thoughtful laymen, who had seen in Robertson Smith the first token of a Church of Scotland Free in a wider and nobler sense than that of the Disruption, never forgave the Church, and in their unforgiveness there was inevitably involved the leader who directed the Church’s policy. They did not secede—though some resigned their elderships—but they ceased to be interested, and their deeper allegiance was quietly withdrawn, with the result that the lay representation in the councils of the Church soon fell into less worthy hands. The new lay magnates were men of large purses and small minds, who had all been more or less infected with the new brand of religiosity that had been brought from America by Moody and Sankey, and whose avowed purpose was to convert the Free Church into a permanent evangelistic mission. To the liberal theologians they accorded a contemptuous toleration, for as practical men they refused to worry about what might be published in books that nobody could be supposed to read. As they had the same contempt for confessional standards, formularies, constitutions, traditions and indeed everything else, the account was squared. The professors, after a few abortive attacks, were left in peace,¹ and in fairness to the Free Church (and its successor the United Free Church) it must be

¹ The last attack—it was a demonstration rather than a genuine heresy hunt—made some twenty-five years ago, was directed against the present Principal of Aberdeen University, Sir George Adam Smith, then Professor of Hebrew at the Glasgow U.F. College.

admitted that it has been consistently liberal in its college appointments. To-day as a body the ministry of the United Free Church is probably the most scholarly in Great Britain, but as religious influence it is curiously inarticulate and impotent, and for that the blame must be attributed to Rainy's fatal decision in the Robertson Smith case. It had the effect, apparently irretrievable as it was unforeseen, of creating a divorce between scholarship and religion in the very life-blood of the Church.

JOHN STUART BLACKIE

THE police inspector was very polite. He had much pleasure in returning to the signore tedesche their passports, and they might rest assured that the Kingdom of Naples was honoured by their presence.

The three German ladies—a mother and two daughters—smiled an uneasy appreciation of the official compliments. There was a suggestion of unpleasantness to come. Their party numbered four, but only three passports had been returned. The inspector took the fourth from his pocket, glanced at it, frowned, put it back in his pocket and blew out his chest.

“But the signore capitano cannot proceed,” he announced.

A hurricane of protests broke out in which a shrill cackling male voice rose high above the melodious German accents of the ladies, and far surpassed them in fluency of invective. It declaimed in more or less choice Italian against officials and tyrannies, principalities and powers, and, when Italian was exhausted, broke out afresh in German, quoted Latin and occasionally clinched matters with a pithy observation in the broadest

Aberdonian and a great guffaw. The ladies became alarmed. Their indignation at the police changed to tearful depreciations of their companion's vehemence. He was only doing himself harm. He was asking to be imprisoned, tortured, shot, hung. Ach, lieber Gott, let him be moderate.

Ah, luckless speech! It heated the Scotsman's wrath seven times over. "Moderate, madam!" he shouted. "I hate and abominate moderation and compromises and discretions and all such subtle crafts and devices invented by the Father of Lies for the destruction of the soul. Moderate when I, a free British citizen, *civis Britannus*, am hindered in my lawful occasions by a Neapolitan Dogberry," etc. etc. etc.

The police inspector, who was not really a bad man, took it all in good part.

"Pazienza, signore capitano——" he began.

"Capitano!" yelled he of the strident voice. "Am I, a student of humanity in the singular and in the plural—mark that, singular *and* plural—a scholar, a philosopher and a Christian soul, which is a grand thing to be, though I grant you a poor profession, am I for ever to have thrust upon me the title and designation of some demented swashbuckler that has gotten into the brains of you and your superiors like a maggot in a rotten ploom? Capitano! In the name of all the gods and saints whom you ignorantly worship, do I look like a capitano?"

A grin of Italian breadth and richness transfigured the official's countenance as he answered, "Davvero no, signore filosofo".

And indeed, for all its ferocity of language and bearing, anything less military than the figure of the suspect could hardly have been imagined. He was an undersized and slightly built youth of two-and-twenty, clad in a shabby and ill-fitting summer suit that had once called itself white. His fine light brown hair flowed about his shoulders, according to the fashion that betokened the German student of the 'thirties. His hands were white and small. That his face was blotched with a disfiguring skin complaint was a pity, for his features were unusually delicate and regular and were saved from being merely beautiful by a pair of restless blue eyes in which intelligence, fury, impishness and good humour sparkled all at once—the eyes of a born actor. His movements were ungraceful but amazingly lively and expressive. He stamped and danced round the common-room of the *albergo*, flung his arms about, shook his mane, and finally threw himself on a bench in an attitude of grotesque despair.

The inspector was sympathetic, but what could he do? All he knew was that an English name very like the signorino's appeared on the black list of the Neapolitan police. No doubt there had been a mistake, but that would be at once rectified when the signorino's passport had been

sent back to Rome for verification. That would take some days, and meanwhile the signorino must consider himself under open arrest.

A groan came from the figure on the bench.

"Ma che, signore filosofo," rejoined the inspector, "la prima delle virtuti filosofiche, non è la pazienza? Pazienza e coraggio, signore."

Whereat John Stuart Blackie, student of the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Göttingen and Berlin, leaped from his recumbent gloom, kissed the police inspector on both cheeks, and shook him warmly by both hands. "You're right, man," he said solemnly, "categorically and completely right. Cicero had to put up with more than this at Mola di Gaeta, and who am I that I should complain? Will you do me the pleasure of drinking a bottle of wine with me?"

The policeman did, and Mr. Blackie communed delightedly with the shade of Cicero for several days until, having been certified from Rome as neither *capitano* nor *carbonaro*, he took an affectionate farewell of the police inspector and went on his way to Naples.

I have taken the liberty of reconstructing this little incident of Blackie's youth for the sake of the picture it gives of the man, not only as he was in 1831 but as he remained in all essential respects throughout his long life. He died in 1895, in his eighty-sixth year, having enjoyed for nearly half a century a unique position in the regard of his fellow-Scots. He was not precisely respected:

nobody could ever harbour so chilly a feeling as respect towards Blackie. He was not precisely admired, partly because he was not precisely admirable and partly because admiration implies something that is beyond our power to imitate. Rather he was adored, with that vicarious and deeply revelling satisfaction men feel in the contemplation of their national genius made flesh. For every patriotic Scot, however staid he may appear, cherishes in some corner of his being the notion that in spirit he is a Blackie.

This may seem a paradox, for excepting his pedantry, his vanity, his constant itch to be improving people in and out of season, his occasional bad manners and his almost invariable bad taste, Blackie had nothing in common with that conglomerate of the bleaker virtues and more sordid vices that is the conventional image of the Scot. He had not even the conventional humour of the Scot, for, strictly speaking, he had no sense of humour at all, but only a sense of fun, which is not the same thing. Of the Scot's proverbial caution (which is but another name for self-distrust) he was utterly devoid. His reckless tongue and manners landed him in many a scrape, and on one occasion all but ruined his career. He was boisterous, bombastic, theatrical, affectionate and generous to an embarrassing degree. His opinion on any subject requiring judgment was liable to change at least once in every twenty-four hours and in spite of all changes was invari-

ably wrong. An exception may be made in favour of his views on the pronunciation of classical Greek and the importance of preserving the Gaelic tongue, which he maintained to his dying day. Yet, within a few hours of his death, he made as his confession of faith that the only things that mattered were "the poems of Burns and the Psalms of David, but the Psalmist first". One can hardly help feeling that had he lived a day longer he might have reversed the order and died protesting with his last gasp his innocence of any inconsistency.

The Celtic temperament has been held responsible for so much that it would be no great addition to its burden to saddle it with Blackie's flightiness, but it would be entirely wrong. For Blackie, though he inaugurated a mild Celtic revival in Scotland, was no Celt. He was a Lowlander born and bred. He came of an old Border stock; he was born in Glasgow; and he spent most of his childhood, youth and early manhood in Aberdeen—a city which, being an outpost settlement, is rigorously anti-Celtic alike in speech and culture. He had a slight strain of Highland blood that his parents thought important enough to be commemorated by the name of Stuart being given to him in baptism, but it does not appear that he himself took any interest in his remote Highland connections, or that he was ever guilty of the foolish Lowland snobbery that boasts vaguely of a Highland ancestry.

Blackie was too simple and too much of an egoist to be a snob, and the idea that descent could be worth a moment's consideration beside the eternal miracle of the individual man would have seemed to him the height of absurdity. It is true that he laboured hard to bring about a Celtic revival in Scotland, but his motives were perfectly disinterested. He was a romantic philologist just as Walter Scott was a romantic antiquarian, and his enthusiasm for the Gaelic tongue proceeded solely from a patriotic desire to preserve a national treasure that was in danger of being lost. He was far advanced in life when the fad came upon him. During a holiday in Skye he casually asked the local postman, who did his rounds on a pony, what was the Gaelic for horse. He was told *each*, and the sudden realisation that *each* must be the same as *equus* and *ἵππος* convinced the Professor of Greek at the University of Edinburgh that Gaelic was a language of some importance. The Gaels were appreciative of his interest. They presented him with illuminated addresses and plied him with as much flattery as ever he could absorb ; but they never failed to snigger when he attempted to speak their mother-tongue.

That a being so inconsequential in character and attainments should have attained a commanding position in the academic life of Scotland may seem strange, but it is in part at least explained by the conditions that prevailed in the Scottish

universities until the middle of the nineteenth century and even later. On the strength of a comparatively low percentage of illiteracy in the general population Scotsmen persisted, with a Chinese complacency, in boasting of their superior "education", and took a childish pleasure in recalling the fact that their little country had four universities when mighty England had but two. Except that the motive of bringing learning to every man's door was praiseworthy, there was really nothing to boast about, and much to regret. The country could barely afford one university, and the pretence of maintaining four could not fail to be disastrous. It resulted in a chronic state of penury and stagnation in which the very idea of a university came near to perishing altogether. It is true that in the eighteenth century Edinburgh developed a famous school of medicine and that in Glasgow also medical and scientific studies may be said to have flourished. Divinity was perhaps in no worse case in Scotland than anywhere else, and it is at least to the Kirk's credit that it always required candidates for its ministry to have a reasonable knowledge of Hebrew. Law was hardly taught at all, and aspirants to the Bar, who really wanted to learn something, betook themselves to the schools of Leyden and Utrecht. But it was in the liberal arts that the academic nakedness of the land was most apparent. The occasional appearance of a commanding figure like Adam Smith, Dugald

Stewart or Thomas Reid cannot disguise the fact that the teaching personnel was poor and the standards of instruction pitiable. In all the universities the faculties of arts were thronged with students—many mere children of eleven or twelve—of whom the only qualification required was that they could read and write, though if they knew a little Latin grammar, so much the better. At “college” they learned enough Latin to be able to stumble through a book of Cæsar or Livy, to recognise a book of Virgil, and to repeat a few of Horace’s odes by heart; enough Greek to read a little Homer and Xenophon; enough philosophy to understand the meaning of *non distributio medii*; and enough mathematics to be able to solve a quadratic equation. Degrees in arts, therefore, were easy to obtain, but though many matriculated few troubled to graduate in a faculty that was regarded as a mere anteroom to the specialised studies of the other faculties. In all the circumstances Samuel Johnson was unusually moderate when he likened learning in Scotland to food in a beleaguered town—where everybody gets a little and nobody gets enough. To aggravate the general conditions, the two smaller and poorer of the Scottish universities kept up the genteel pretence of a collegiate constitution. St. Andrews had three and Aberdeen two “colleges”. To-day the names alone survive, but in 1821, when John Blackie was entered as “*civis universitatis Aber-*

donienseis” at the ripe age of twelve, King’s and Marischal were rival institutions, both miserably equipped but equally determined at all costs to maintain their dignity as independent corporations. At Marischal, which was Blackie’s college, there was no Professor of Humanity. The students were drilled in Latin accidence and syntax by the rector of the Grammar School, who filled the office of lecturer.

For a lad who was intended for the lower branch of the law, the curriculum was perhaps sufficient; but when, after a short experience of an Aberdeen “advocate’s” office, certain adolescent heart searchings convinced Blackie that he had a religious vocation, he was sent to Edinburgh to learn a little Greek and to pick up, if possible, some general culture from “Christopher North”. He remained in Edinburgh nearly two years, during which time he learned no more Greek than sufficed to enable him to pick his way through the Gospels with the aid of the Authorised Version, and, after a promising start, grievously disappointed Wilson by his neglect of class exercises. In due course crusty Christopher spoke to him more in sorrow than in anger. “What has been the matter, Mr. Blackie? There is something here that I cannot understand. You gave me in an excellent essay, one of the best I have received this session, and I fully expected to have you on my prize-list; but you have given me only one, and you know

my rule." It is recorded that Blackie wept, but said nothing. He never lacked courage, but there are some communications that simply cannot be made. How, for example, at the age of sixteen could one tell Christopher North that the study of moral philosophy, however excellent, was as filthy rags compared with the acquisition of evangelical truth and the assurance of the life eternal?

Poor John! Edinburgh in 1825, for all its superior culture, was no place for him. There was more free emotion in the air than was healthy for an exceptionally impressionable youth of sixteen. Scotland was on the eve of its fiercest religious struggle since the days of Knox. For a century the Moderate party had ruled the Kirk, often with a high hand, but on the whole in the interests of commonsense and fairplay for the average sensual men for whom, after all, Christ died. Now, however, their long ascendancy was drawing to a close. The Evangelicals, from a contemptible faction, torn by intestine feuds, had become a powerful and disciplined party, which every year attracted to itself in increasing numbers the youth, the enthusiasm, the learning and, what was really serious, the new wealth of the country. In 1825 actual warfare was still some years distant, but the rival parties were massing their forces and concentrating upon strategical points. The Moderates were silent, sullen and bitter, knowing that they would have

to fight a losing battle. The Evangelicals were vocal and arrogant. The citadel was already in their hands, and they could boast from their pulpits (and did) that Moab was their washpot and over Edom would they throw their shoe. Blackie, with his constitutional weakness for being on the side of the angels, succumbed to the prevailing sentiment of Edinburgh. He searched the Scriptures, visited the slums, prayed without ceasing and lamented his lost condition. This was all very well, but it was not what his father had sent him to Edinburgh for. Mr. Alexander Blackie was a quiet but determined Moderate who, as a devout man and a bank manager, knew that there was a time for all things. In consequence of his unseasonable piety John was forthwith brought back to Aberdeen so that he might complete his theological course in an atmosphere which, if chilly, was at least uncontaminated by the hot and clammy breath of the evangelical sirocco that blew over the south and west. It was a happy change. The Professor of Divinity at Marischal College, Dr. Brown, who was also Principal of the University, had once held a chair at Utrecht, and his great ambition was to revive at Aberdeen the art of Latin disputation. Blackie was one of the few men who responded to his efforts. He did not learn much theology from him—nobody ever did for the good reason that Dr. Brown had never been able to learn much himself—but

he did learn the art of thinking and speaking in moderately classical Latin, and the process cleared and cheered him wonderfully. Still Mr. Blackie, senior, was not satisfied. John continued to be too religious and moody for his father's taste, and so the desperate course was taken of sending him to Germany "to have his jacket widened", as it was expressed. In April 1829 he sailed from Leith in the Hamburg packet with two companions, sons of the minister of Old Machar, *en route* for Göttingen.

There is to this day, with all its freedom of communication and breaking down of old barriers, something pathetic about the plight of the young Scotsman who makes his first adventure to the Continent or even across the Border. He is as raw and defenceless as a crab without its carapace. All his life he has lived in a community that may fairly be described as the hermit kingdom of Western Europe, and *mutatis mutandis*, he has all the virtues and limitations of a Tibetan—that is to say, he is an intelligent—at times extremely intelligent—kindly soul who has been brought up in the belief that religion and civilisation, properly understood, are bounded by his own surly coasts and the river Tweed. He has a profound respect for his national institutions, which are peculiar without being in the least original. They consist for the most part of a jurisprudence in which the Civil Law and French feudalism hold an uneasy converse with certain

elements of the common law of England, a church that is the perfection of Presbyterianism but has lost all appreciable contact with Geneva or Holland, and a manner of speaking English which is with difficulty intelligible to the average English ear by reason of its pure vowels and clear articulation. The discovery that these worthy institutions are not valued by the world at large as he values them is disconcerting and painful in the extreme, and the young Scot's first reaction to it is that the world at large must be wrong. This is particularly so in the matter of religion. Strictly speaking, the Scottish people have very little religious capacity—witness the fact that they have produced no religious literature of any repute—but they are (or were until recently) convinced that the whole of Christianity consists in certain religious observances, of which “Sabbath” observance is by far the most important. The rigours of the Scottish Sabbath have lately been somewhat mitigated, but within the memory of men not far advanced in middle life they were formidable indeed. All secular amusements other than eating and sleeping, which were freely indulged in, were not merely forbidden; they were unthinkable. The child who absent-mindedly hummed a “profane” tune sent a thrill of genuine horror through the nursery, and even the occasional singing of the National Anthem in church produced an uncomfortable feeling. The writing of letters was

winked at in liberal families, always provided that they were not business letters and were posted after dark. To read a novel was scandalous, while to open a newspaper (except for the purpose of referring to church notices) was the abomination of desolation. For the purpose of going to or from church, but not otherwise, it was lawful for the laity (though not expedient) to ride in a Sunday tramcar. For a minister, however, who must testify to the Church's disapproval of Sunday tramways, a cab was a religious necessity.

Such being the Sabbath rôle of life in the 'eighties and 'nineties, one can imagine its austerity in 1829, and John Blackie's consequent discomfort at finding that Sunday at Göttingen was not at all like the Lord's Day at Aberdeen. People in general did not go to church much, but they went to the opera a good deal, and in that regard students and professors, even professors of theology, were the worst sinners. Against that there was the quelling fact that these professors and students represented a plane of knowledge that the simple Scot had never even imagined. To him the teaching of the German universities was a revelation as full of thunderings and bright light as that which befell Paul on the Damascus road, and hardly less bewildering. Here was learning as large as life, if not larger. Compared with Saalfeld and Ottfried Müller Principal Brown was a shrunken and misshapen

pigmy, and even Christopher North was no giant. And when, after a semester at Göttingen Blackie went to Berlin and heard Schleiermacher, Neander and Boeckh, the conquest of his native innocence was complete. Even his Sabbatarianism, which hitherto he had continued to wear with a dour defiance, was well-nigh stripped from him by a casual remark of Neander's that the Scottish notion of Sunday observance was "etwas jüdisch, nicht wahr?" This occurred in the course of a civil conversation at one of the professor's Sunday evening receptions which Blackie, after some consideration, considered he might lawfully attend. Seldom has so trite a remark excited so much commotion in the hearer. It was the decisive moment of his life. For the first time, as he himself records, he realised that Scottish theology and Christianity were not convertible terms, and the discovery gave him a sudden distaste for the ministry. A joyous *Wanderjahre* in Italy, which followed the German year, served only to confirm his change of mind. He returned to Aberdeen in high spirits, proclaiming that nothing would induce him to become a minister, and that his mission in life would be to reform the teaching of the humanities in the Scottish universities according to the best German models. And this, under Providence, whose ways are incalculable, he did after a fashion achieve.

His initial prospects were not bright—in fact

anyone less fitted by nature and attainments to make an academic figure could hardly have existed between Maidenkirk and John o' Groat's. It is true that he returned from the Continent with a very decent measure of what may be termed accomplishments. Ottfried Müller and Boeckh, Schleiermacher, Neander and Strauss had given him such general notions of culture as an extremely ignorant but intelligent foreign student might pick up in a couple of semesters. In Italy he had enjoyed the friendship and fatherly guidance of Bunsen. Starting with a good store of scholastic Latin, just a little Greek and no modern language, he had within two years learned to speak, write and think in German and Italian, liberalised his Latin and advanced his Greek. He had also acquired a working knowledge of Romaic and of English as it is generally spoken. The expediency of the latter accomplishment would probably not have occurred to him had not a fellow-student asked him to give a few lessons in English in return for some assistance with Goethe and Schiller. Blackie, ever conscientious, made a diligent study of phonetics according to Walker's Dictionary,¹ and for the rest of his life he prided himself on the correctness of his English speech.

¹ Walker's Dictionary (3rd edition) included "Rules to be observed by the Natives of Scotland for attaining a Just Pronunciation of English", contributed by John Murdoch, Burns's schoolmaster and tutor. Murdoch had the distinction of instructing Burns in the elements of French and Talleyrand in the elements of English.

All this was good enough in its way, but hardly enough to constitute a title to a university chair, even if its limited value had not been discounted by glaring demerits. Blackie had studied at four universities with credit but without special distinction : he had not even a degree. He had considerable learning, garnished with a certain amount of fantastic pedantry, but he was no scholar, if by the term scholar we understand one who can so organise his learning that it becomes something more than the mere aggregate of all he knows. For teaching he had no capacity whatever. In themselves these defects would have been of little account. The Scottish universities were full of men who could neither learn nor teach ; but they were grave men who rode cannily, whose orthodoxy and devotion to the Tory party were above suspicion, and who could hold their tongues. But Blackie was a noisy, garrulous, guffawing, opinionative fellow, uncouth in dress, eccentric in demeanour—

He'll flourish bludgeons and wear tartan breeks,
A monstrous stock and lang hair ower the cheeks—

a latitudinarian, a Radical and, worst of all, a man who could never be made to understand the difference between thinking a thing and saying it.

Yet the improbable happened ; nor had Blackie very long to wait for it. Seven years after his return from the Continent he had a chair. In the interval he had been admitted to the Scots

Bar and had practised as an advocate—that is to say, he had frequented Parliament House daily and had held two briefs in the course of five years. These Edinburgh days, however, were not unprofitable. He zealously continued his Greek studies. His knowledge of German and his facile pen found him in bread and cheese and even toddy for social occasions. While still reading law as a student he had undertaken a translation of Part I. of *Faust*. (Part II. he held in no esteem.) When it appeared Carlyle and G. H. Lewes spoke well of it, but it could not please anybody more than it pleased Blackie himself. “It has been my first and chief endeavour”, he wrote in the preface, “to seize, if possible, the very soul and living power of the German rather than to give a careful and anxious transcription of every individual line or minute expression.” This is Blackie to perfection in its flamboyant assurance and fine contempt for exactitude as a slave virtue. All his life he loved attempting magnificent things in a slapdash way and, whatever others might think, he was seldom dissatisfied with the result. Such simple enthusiasms are apt to be infectious. On the strength of the favourable reception of *Faust* he became a regular contributor to *Blackwood* and the *Foreign Quarterly Review*. For some years he confined himself to German subjects, but in 1838, feeling that he now knew enough Greek to be going on with, he wrote an article on

Müller's *Eumenides* in which, with much flourishing of the bludgeon, he proclaimed his faith in German classical scholarship and his undying contempt for the English variety. In the following year, having begun a translation of Aeschylus, he gave the world, through the medium of the *Foreign Quarterly*, his views on "Greek Rhythms and Metres", a subject which he was peculiarly unfitted to discuss profitably; for though the most inveterate jingler and rhyme-slinger that ever lived he had a poor ear and was incapable of writing a musical line of verse. But the article was fresh, provocative and, in its way, erudite, and it appeared at a moment which gained it more attention than it might otherwise have received. Only a few weeks before the date of publication the author had been appointed to the newly established chair of Humanity at Marischal College, Aberdeen.

Blackie's appointment was denounced at the time as a Whig job, and so it was. The member of Parliament for Aberdeen, Mr. Bannerman, was a great friend of the Blackie family, and a man of some address and interest. He persuaded the Government to establish and endow a chair of Humanity at Marischal College "with me to recommend a man the place 'ud juist about fit". His recommendation of Mr. John Stuart Blackie, advocate, was duly accepted. It was a great stroke of fortune, and there was nothing for Blackie to do but to thank God for His good gift

and to proceed to enjoy it. Nothing, that is, that would have occurred to anyone not afflicted with that predilection for the unseasonable that in Scotland is known as "principle". With Her Majesty's commission in his hands, Blackie suddenly bethought himself of a horrid obstacle to his installation, viz. the Westminster Confession of Faith, which in those days of university tests every professor-elect was required to subscribe. Could the pupil of Neander and Schleiermacher conscientiously sign such a thing, and if so, on what conditions? It was a hard question, and Blackie's answer, with its droll mingling of innocence and guile, was the worst possible. He appeared before the Presbytery of Aberdeen and signed the gruesome document. Then, when the clerk was proceeding to make out the usual certificate, he requested that it should be put on record that he had signed the Confession "not as my private confession of faith, nor as a churchman learned in theology, but in my public professorial capacity and in reference to University offices and duties merely". The reverend court were not in the least impressed. "We have nothing to do with any gentleman's mental reservations", was their reply.

Now it never annoyed Blackie to be laughed at—in fact he liked it; nor did he mind being contradicted, for he had a plentiful supply, if not of retorts courteous, at least of quips valiant, not to speak of lies direct, and he could flourish his

bludgeon. What he could not stand was a snub. He went out from the Presbytery with their precious certificate in his pocket and wrath in his heart. That same evening he sent his declaration to the two leading Aberdeen newspapers with a covering letter in which he said what he thought about the Presbytery of Aberdeen, and which in his heat he forgot to mark "not for publication". The sequel was an uproar in which all parties lost their heads. The Presbytery, raging furiously together, cited Mr. Blackie to "compear" before them and apologise; whereat Mr. Blackie said very civilly that whatever emperors might do, there would be no Canossa for John Stuart Blackie, and he would compear before the Devil first; whereat the Presbytery declared Mr. Blackie's certificate of subscription null and void and ordered him to give it up; whereat Mr. Blackie (acting on legal advice) said he would do nothing of the sort; whereat the Senatus of Marischal College, rejoicing that the Whig intruder would now be sent about his business, postponed Mr. Blackie's installation *sine die*; whereat Mr. Blackie haled the Senatus before the Court of Session; whereat the Senatus said it was all the Presbytery's fault; whereat the Presbytery craved to be sisted as defenders;¹ whereat Lord Cunninghame kicked the Presbytery out of court on the ground that their statutory duty to witness subscriptions was

¹ Applied to the Court to be joined as defendants.

purely ministerial; whereat Mr. Blackie's joy was tempered by the reflection that since his appointment two years had elapsed during which he had not received a penny of stipend, and that the Court had shown its appreciation of his stand for principle by calling his scruples impertinent and deprived him of his costs for causing unnecessary trouble. Still victory is victory, and to the end of his days Blackie was convinced that the abolition of the University tests in 1853 was in large measure due to his action in 1839.

Such was the rough music that preluded the rollicking comedy of academic life that Blackie played for the next half-century. He delivered an inaugural lecture full of *Aufklärung* and uplift, which the Aberdonians found so entertaining that, when in the following January—on the sacred anniversary of Burns's birth—he discoursed to a popular audience on "The Principles of Poetry and the Fine Arts", the occasion was a great success. The little man was elated. "There's for you," he wrote to his betrothed, Eliza Wyld. "Platonism preached to the granite ears of Aberdeen, and with applause!" There was but one flaw in the performance—he had read the lecture, and that vexed him. "I will not be satisfied now till I become a great public speaker. . . . My intention is to free myself altogether from the bondage of the paper, and get to preach real poetry and eloquence. . . . A bold cast for an erect soul, looking not down on

slavish paper ! . . . Let me bellow my pedagogic thunders grandly ! ” And bellow them grandly he did for the rest of his life, according to his own noisy notion of grandeur. Never again did he clip the wings of his spoken words by committing them first to paper. Never again was his heart troubled by considerations of relevance or restraint in anything he said. His tongue wagged, his spirit soared, his students raised the devil’s own row, the vulgar mob cheered, and Blackie was supremely happy. There was, no doubt, a method in his madness. He knew—and if he did not know beforehand his students soon opened his eyes—that he was no teacher in the ordinary sense of the term, for the devout disciple of Carlyle and future encomiast of Prussian *Machtpolitik* lacked the capacity for mastership which is the teacher’s first quality. The Scottish student is by nature turbulent, but he is kept within bounds by his belief in the Olympian character of the professor’s rostrum. Now Blackie loved the Olympian character—none more so—but, child-like, he could never sustain it very long. He fidgeted in his lofty seat and was for ever making undignified descents to the common level, enjoying the divine thunderings but loathing the detachment that gives them their value in the ears of mortal men. A vain man—and Blackie was vain as a peacock—who also has a craving for familiarity generally falls into the contempt that Blackie just managed to

escape. One degree less of essential lovable-ness, of perfect innocence, of ardent idealism would have made the difference. But as it was his frailties served him uncommonly well. His classroom was a bear-garden, but even a bear-garden may be cultivated. Blackie made it one of his means of propaganda. His students, unruly as they were under his instruction, went out into the world and talked about him as a notable character who was worth watching. He developed his popular lectures, and if his platform antics made the public laugh, that was all to the good so long as they kept asking for more. He pamphleteered at prodigious length about university reform, and to prove that he was a person to be taken seriously he finished his translation of Aeschylus and sold up his household furniture to pay for its publication.

In these various ways the Professor of Humanity at Marischal College acquired a certain fame, so that when, at the end of 1851, he entered as a candidate for the chair of Greek at Edinburgh, his friends were able with some plausibility to represent him as a scholar and a man of genius. The Town Council of Edinburgh, who were the patrons of the chair, were quite prepared to believe this even to the extent of forgiving Blackie for omitting to prepay the postage on his application (testimonials from Ritschl and Brandes enclosed), which shows how superior were these worthy men to small

prejudices. Blackie overdid it, however. Instead of allowing his antic disposition to get what glamour it might from the distance between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, he must needs arrive in Edinburgh in full panoply of bludgeon, breeks and bad manners to conduct a personal canvass of the patrons. And before his distracted friends could hustle him back to Aberdeen he had mortally offended most of his potential supporters. To repair the mischief was a heartbreaking task. The old scandal of the Confession of Faith was raked up, and it was further reported that Blackie was an habitual Sabbath-breaker and contemner of religious ordinances. The Town Council took a serious view of such matters, as Agassiz found a few years later. That distinguished man applied for the chair of Natural History. The first councillor he canvassed listened to his story and put one question. "Are ye a jined member o' ony recognised releegious body?" Agassiz retired. Blackie was more fortunate. A conscientious bailie went to Aberdeen to make inquiries on the spot about the candidate's Sabbath Day doings. He brought back a favourable report, and after a notable contest the casting vote of Lord Provost Duncan McLaren, M.P., gave Blackie the chair. On what grounds of reason or predilection the council made their final choice it passes the wit of man to say. Blackie's most serious rivals were an Englishman and an Irishman—Sir William Smith and Pro-

fessor Macdonell—both of whom could have given him many points in scholarship, but it would be unfair to ascribe his success to the fact that he was a Scotsman. Nor was he a compromise, for no body of men outside of Bedlam would have chosen Blackie by way of a compromise appointment. It was one of those things that simply happen and which, if they are to be interpreted at all, can be interpreted only in terms of emotion. One can hardly imagine any body of Englishmen electing a man like Blackie to anything, much less to the dignity of a professorship: their ingrained sense of discipline and respect for public conventions would secure them against doing anything so interesting and indefensible. In Scotland, however, the tradition of discipline is a recent growth, and to this day it is always difficult to get a Scotsman to understand why things that “are not done” ought not to be done. He makes a great parade of his respectability and takes a genuine pride in it, just as a savage takes a genuine pride in his store clothes; but there is always the secret hankering for the loin-cloth and feathers, and sometimes it has its way. So, one may imagine, it was with the God-fearing burghesses of Edinburgh when Blackie appeared among them. They heard the old wild music; they were repelled; they were fascinated; they struggled; they succumbed.

In the event they had no need to be ashamed. Victorian Edinburgh was a grim town. The

industrial revolution had struck a mortal blow at the intellectual and artistic life that had made the last quarter of the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth century the golden age of Edinburgh. And like the men of letters the Scottish gentry, who had hitherto been content with Edinburgh as their metropolis, now acknowledged the supremacy of London. The evangelical revival wrought its glowing will upon those that remained—churchmen who made the grey welkin ring with their brawling, lawyers, doctors, second-rate Government officials, bankers, shopkeepers and a foul mass of slum dwellers who could boast that they were just as parasitic as their betters. Mr. Turveydrop, masquerading in Sabbatarian black and a Geneva gown, and Mrs. Grundy governed the city. It was John Stuart Blackie's function, by the grace of God and the unwisdom of the Town Council, to act as a spiritual tribune against that melancholy consulate, and knowing it he bore himself accordingly. "When I walk along Princes Street", he once remarked, "I go with a kingly air, my head erect, my chest expanded, my hair flowing, my plaid flying, my stick swinging. Do you know what makes me do that? Well, I'll tell you—just *con-ceit*." The person at whom this half-brick of paradox was flung was probably too much stunned to realise that it was not a confession but an admonition to imitate one who respected his own feelings because he was a man made in God's

image and a king in that he would allow none the right to tell him how to behave. He was fond of discoursing *ad libitum* in this strain, and no doubt did a lot of good thereby in a community where people went through life apologising to Heaven for being a little lower than the angels. That his glorification of the individual might have sinister implications never troubled him: his Germanism never included a liking for Hegel or a knowledge of Nietzsche. If the point had been taken he would have retorted that John Stuart Blackie was a free activity specially created by God and not a schoolman's syllogism invented by the Devil. And he would have been right, for, as a dour Divinity student grudgingly observed of him, "Blackie is neither orthodox, heterodox nor any ither dox: he's juist himsel." All the same, his "philosophy", as he was pleased to call it, could make the kindliest of men grovel before Bismarck, rant sentimental nonsense in praise of war, and utter a volume of *War Songs from the German*, dedicated to Carlyle, who cordially acknowledged the compliment and supposed that, "if one could sing, they would be very musical and heart-inspiring".

The election to the Greek Chair at Edinburgh is the last thing in Blackie's life that can be called an event. The long remainder of his years consisted merely of amusing incidents and a reputation. He was always busy, of course, for a

reputation like Blackie's needs to be kept going, and that means hard work. He published without ceasing—pamphlets, books and articles on university reform, Greek, politics, morals, Scottish nationality and anything else on which he thought the public mind required edification, and a vast amount of doggerel rhyme, sentimental, religious, patriotic and facetious. He toured the Highlands and most of Europe, was frequently in London and met everybody he could there. He lectured. He sang. He even danced as King David did. Details would be tedious, but a few characteristic dates may be mentioned. In 1861 he visited Eversley and "helped Kingsley to drain a bottle of burgundy". In 1863, while spending a holiday in Skye, he learned that Gaelic was an Aryan tongue—a discovery that filled him with such enthusiasm that after nearly twenty years' agitation he succeeded in establishing a Celtic Chair at Edinburgh. In 1864 he lectured at the Royal Institution on the laws of Sparta (so bellicosely that an indignant Quaker protested and left the hall) and met Herbert Spencer, whom he found "logical without being angular—a very loveable sort of man". He also breakfasted with Gladstone at Carlton House Terrace, where he quarrelled with a Cambridge Don about the pronunciation of Greek and afterwards felt a little guilty about it, though he was sure he was "not impertinent, only decidedly and distinctly explosive". In

1866 he published a translation of Homer which has merits but is not read. In 1867 he met Browning, "an active, soldier-like, direct man, a contrast to the meditative ponderosity of Tennyson". In 1871 he went to Berlin to witness and take part in the German triumph, wrote a sonnet on Bismarck and sent it to the subject, who omitted to acknowledge receipt of same. In 1872 he colloqued with Cardinal Manning and dabbled in spiritualism, for which he was severely rebuked by Carlyle. In 1874 he heard Bradlaugh and liked him so much that he wrote him a long letter hoping "that in the Socratic way I may do him some good", in which he was disappointed, though Bradlaugh was very civil. In the same year he gave the first of the lectures on Scottish song, with vocal illustrations by himself, which continued to be a popular entertainment for many years. In 1880 he espoused the cause of the Highland crofters with an honest zeal that excused a multitude of indiscretions. In May 1882, lecturing at Oxford, he used the Master of Balliol's surname to illustrate his views on Greek accentuation, which so hurt the little panjandrum's dignity that he walked out. Three months later, being well over three score and ten, he resigned his professorship and devoted the thirteen years of life that remained to him to the maintenance of his character as a Scottish national institution. In 1885 he burst into the vestry of Lyndhurst Road

Church, Hampstead, one Sunday, and kissed Dr. Horton on both cheeks in token of his appreciation of that gentleman's pulpit gifts. In 1888 he was able to record "a very warm friendly time with Browning, who loves me like a brother", and a party at Lord Rosebery's town house where, at the express request of Mrs. Gladstone, he obliged the company with "The Bonnie House o' Airlie" so as to stop the G.O.M. from discoursing on French novels and Popery—"both unlovely subjects". A day or two later he admired in the afternoon a "most wonderful thunder-roll of piano force from a Polish girl named Natalie Janotha" that he heard at Mary Anderson's, and in the evening Wilson Barrett's performance in *Ben-my-chree*, as to which we have Sir Hall Caine's word for it that the translator of Aeschylus "wept like a little child".

Blackie's appearance was not so much distinguished as distinctive, and he was always at pains to make it more so by freakish experiments in dress. The tartan breeks of his earlier days have been mentioned, and there was also for a short time a singular wig that aroused the mirth of the Edinburgh students. The outdoor costume he finally adopted, and wore for more than thirty years, consisted of a black sombrero, a plaid draped Highland fashion over his frock-coat, and a stout and rustic walking-stick—a combination no doubt intended to suggest the

garb of old Gaul, the fire of old Rome and the *Wissenschaftlichkeit* of Göttingen in the 'thirties. But whatever the intention, it was exceedingly becoming to a lively old man with beautiful features and feathery white hair. Indoors he still wore his sombrero to shield his eyes while working, but exchanged his frock-coat and plaid for a brown dressing-gown trimmed with red. In this guise he received his friends, who, if they did not mind exhortations, puns, guffaws, jingles, kisses, punches in the ribs and slaps on the back, enjoyed themselves wonderfully. In any case, Mrs. Blackie would be there to relieve the situation. Eliza Wyld—who had insisted upon marrying her queer cousin in 1842, not exactly *malgré lui* but rather to his surprise—was her husband's antitype, being tall, elegant in all her ways, tactful, sparing of words and a confirmed hypochondriac. She ruled him strictly and bore him no children, both of which afflictions he suffered cheerfully. After all, it was something to be the husband of one of the Wyld girls of Gilston—"the five finest female figures in Fife", as he liked to call them. As a brother-in-law and as an uncle he was greatly beloved, and he made the most affectionate, the most *galant* of husbands.

This excellent man, who loved all mankind except the Pope and Oxford and Cambridge Dons, died on March 2, 1895, in his eighty-sixth year. All his life he had been a bit of a mounte-

bank, and in his old age he nearly became a bore. But when he was borne to his grave in the Dean Cemetery all Scotland mourned, and well it might, for he had deserved well of his country. His specific enthusiasms—university reform, Scottish nationalism and so forth—were of little account. His real service was to provide his generation of Scotsmen with what William James calls the “moral holiday”. Poor souls, they needed it.

KEIR HARDIE

It is said that the Scots are a politically minded race, but the statement requires some qualification. One cannot, of course, escape the remarkable fact that of the eleven men who have held the office of Prime Minister during the past fifty years, six have borne typical Scottish names and have been of more or less pure Scottish descent, and that generally a large and quite disproportionate number of Scotsmen have been prominent in the political life of the country. But that proves no more than that the Scots have a great inclination and aptitude for English party politics, greater, it may even be, than that of the English themselves. It does not prove that they are politically minded in the creative sense. They may be, but the course of history has not allowed them to show it. As things are, the Scotsman who follows a political career must proceed along the lines prescribed by English convention and accept whatever situation the English genius may create, limitations with which as a rule he is perfectly content. There is therefore no specifically Scottish content in his public life.

He does nothing that could not equally well be done by a Welshman or a Jew, or for that matter an Englishman. To this rule there has been only one exception. Keir Hardie made the one specifically Scottish contribution to British politics, and it is worth while noting that it consisted primarily of the destruction of a peculiarly English institution, namely, the Liberal party. Of course, his ostensible ground of attack was the "capitalist" character of Liberalism, but as Keir Hardie was never able to distinguish clearly between "capitalist" and "English", that hardly signifies.

In an oracular aside in *Endymion* Disraeli hinted that when in the fullness of time Labour threw off the yoke of the Whigs, the movement of revolt would originate in the industrial West of Scotland. Actually the first independent Labour member of Parliament was returned by a Metropolitan constituency, and it was in the North of England that the movement first manifested itself as a serious political force. The West of Scotland, though now fervid enough, was the laggard of the movement, and Paisley, which Disraeli specified as the most likely focus of the new spirit, was in fact the last of the constituencies in the area to abandon its tradition of Liberalism. But these appearances are misleading. Disraeli's prediction was substantially right even to the intuition that the movement would originate in the neighbourhood of Glasgow

rather than in Glasgow itself. Keir Hardie, founder of the Labour party, was a native of the Airdrie district. It was as a local agitator that he conceived his project and took the first steps to realise it. The fact would have no significance if Hardie had been an exceptional man, for genius does not take much account of localities. But Hardie was not an exceptional man. He was, despite his own artless opinion to the contrary, a very ordinary man. Even his best gifts were in no way distinguished. In general intelligence and capacity for affairs he was definitely below the average of the Labour politicians of to-day, and that is not inordinately high. His political value consisted mainly in the fact that he was a typical product of his district, and as such peculiarly fitted to be the initial agent in the destruction of the Liberal party. To describe him as the leader of the Labour revolt against Liberalism would be to attribute to him personal qualities that he did not possess. It would be more proper to say that he was the inevitable "incident" upon which the revolt broke out.

The industrial population of the Clyde valley, in so far as it is not Irish, consists largely of the descendants of West Highland immigrants, people of the short, dark, Hebridean race. They are intelligent and expressive, but volatile, deficient in the individual virtues, and highly susceptible to mass emotions. Such are the overwhelming majority of the Scottish inhabitants of Greater

Glasgow. But when one leaves the riverside and penetrates landward of Glasgow into the black country that lies to the south and east, there is a difference. The Irish and the West Highlanders are there in their tens of thousands, but they have not submerged the original population, who belong to a tougher race whose resistive capacity has more than once changed the course of Scottish history. In the south one is in the Wallace country, the cradle of Scottish nationalism; the east was the stronghold of the Covenanters. Of the native stock of the latter district something has already been said in connection with the Rev. James Begg.¹ They are, in the Scots phrase, essentially "thrawn folk". They are, as Scotsmen go, rather slow-witted and of a perverse and fanatical temper. Their most respectable characteristics are tenacity, courage, and a surly kind of honesty.

Hardie's mother, Mary Keir, came of this uncompromising stock. In Glasgow, where she was in domestic service, she met her husband, David Hardie, a Grangemouth man, who had migrated to Glasgow and who sometimes went to sea as a ship's carpenter and sometimes worked ashore as a shipwright. Mary Keir was the dominant partner from the outset. Upon marriage David Hardie was agreeable to leave the riverside, on which his livelihood had hitherto depended, and migrate to his wife's home in the

¹ *Vide* page 71.

Lanarkshire coalfield. Their first child, James Keir, was born at the mining village of Legbrannock near Airdrie on August 15, 1856.

The change of surroundings was not a lucky one, and in the course of the 'sixties David Hardie, having got a good quiverful without receiving any of the corresponding blessings, returned to Glasgow to seek employment in the yards. As work was hard to get and harder still to keep, the life of the Hardie family in Glasgow presented all the usual features of that painful degree of industrial poverty which verges upon but is never suffered to lapse into abject misery. James, of course, at an early age had to go out to work as an errand boy. There is a Dickensian story of one of his employers, a prosperous and godly baker, who held the accepted view—having no doubt some hard experience to back it—that all errand boys were sons of Belial. One morning, owing to sickness in the home, young Jamie Hardie arrived at the shop late and breakfastless. He was at once haled to his master's parlour—for the good man lived above the shop—to be admonished. The family had just sat down to breakfast, and the smell of eggs and bacon and "baps"—most delicious and indigestible triumph of Scotch bakership—fresh and fragrant from the oven pierced the very soul of the hungry lad. But through the sweet savours came the acrid voice of his master. "Ay, here ye come at lang last. A thocht ye'd maybe forgot us. A'm sure

we're muckle obleeged to yer lordship. But we're daein' fine, thank ye. Mphm. And we could dae fine if we niver saw ye again. . . . Haud yer tongue! Wid ye stan' there and tell me lees tae ma face? A ken yous and the likes o' yous—fine A ken ye. Ye're hert lazy, that's whit ye are. Awa' tae yer wark and thank yer Maker ye hae wark tae gang tae. There's no mony wid gie ye the chance. But min' ye, the next time ye're a meenute behind, it's the kick for you, ma mannie, and nae pey. . . . The impident wee keelie!"

Of course Jamie Hardie offended again before very long and lost his job and a week's wages. His master was a man of his word, whom no tears or entreaties could move in a matter of "principle" to the extent of a hair's breadth, much less to the extent of four shillings and sixpence. There is no occasion to blame him, or to call the religious professions we are told he made hypocrisy. He was simply working according to a rule of thumb which thousands of quite decent men, with their living to get, feel they dare not disobey in any circumstances. But the victims cannot be expected to see it in that light. Incidents like Jamie's dismissal from the baker's shop were painfully familiar to his parents. David Hardie brooded over them, took to reading Tom Paine and Bradlaugh and became a cantankerous freethinker. Mary Hardie also had her thoughts while at her endless toil. She

had no use for her husband's feckless contentiousness on the subject, but she shared his views to the extent of renouncing formal religion—a very remarkable thing in a well-doing working woman of her generation and upbringing. Henceforward no minister, missionary, elder or other emissary of orthodoxy dared cross the Hardie threshold.

At last David Hardie, finding it impossible to get steady employment in the yards, went to sea again, and his family went back to the Airdrie district. The boys got employment in the pits. Graduating from pony-driver to coal-hewer, James worked as a miner through the bad years that fell upon the coal industry in the later 'seventies. Wages, which had been grotesquely inflated during the "boom" that followed the Franco-Prussian war, were now depressed to a starvation level, and there was unrest and agitation in every coalfield. In Lanarkshire conditions were peculiarly bad. The men were powerless for lack of organisation, for their union had collapsed entirely under the financial stress. The coal-owners had no wish to see it revived. Pit managers kept their eyes and ears open, and weeded out without mercy any man who showed speech-making proclivities. Young Keir Hardie soon made himself obnoxious in this respect, with the result that one morning, when he and his brothers were about to descend, they were ordered out of the cage with the

intimation that the management would have "nae damned Hardies in the pit". It proved to be a short-sighted piece of victimisation, for it turned Hardie into a professional agitator. He never worked as a miner again. Removing to Cadzow, he set up in a very small way as a tobacconist and newsagent. Thanks to his mother's constant urgings he had educated himself fairly well for a miner of those days and had learned shorthand. He was thus able to add slightly to his income by acting as Coatbridge and Airdrie correspondent to the *Glasgow Weekly Mail*. The few shillings that he got weekly by his journalistic work were the least part of its importance to him. The *Weekly Mail* belonged to the late Sir Charles Cameron, then and for many years afterwards one of the Glasgow Liberal members of Parliament. It was a stoutly Radical organ, closely packed with crime and local news and enjoying an immense circulation among the working classes of the West. Sabbatarian Scotland not permitting of that evil thing a "Sunday" paper, this purveyor of information and sensation was religiously published on Saturday, but it was on the Sunday that the working man found time to read it as he lay in bed—whence it acquired its nickname of "The Working Man's Bible". The working man himself called it simply the "bluidy *Mail*".

In a big industrial centre like Coatbridge,

therefore, the local correspondent of the *Weekly Mail* was a man of some consequence in working-class estimation. And though it was journalism of the humblest order, it taught Hardie something of the art of news-gathering and gave him facility with his pen. He had a real aptitude for work of the kind, and in the propaganda journalism that he later pursued to the end of his life, though he never wrote anything worth remembering, he was always competent, readable, even lively.

It is well to be quite clear about Keir Hardie's state of mind at this point in his career, for only too easily false deductions may be made from the domestic circumstances of his childhood. His parents' poverty and their anti-religious opinions seem to be perfect conditions for the manufacture of a Socialist pioneer. But in his early days as a trade union official Keir Hardie was not a Socialist. His bitter experiences in Glasgow, where the grim spectre of unemployment constantly brooded over the home, had not filled his young mind with the stern resolve to discover the cause of it all. As a pit worker he had not spent his scanty leisure poring over Marx and learning all about capitalism, surplus value, over-production and the materialist interpretation of history. When afterwards he did turn Socialist his text-books were *News from Nowhere*, *Unto this Last*, and the poems of Robert Burns. He may in later years have dipped into *Das*

Kapital as a professing Christian dips into the Bible; but as for understanding it, that was a feat beyond his intellectual strength, and there is no reason to believe that he ever attempted it. Keir Hardie was fond of books—a trait that he inherited from his mother—but his preferences, though eminently respectable, ran in the direction of “soft” reading—romantic poetry, romantic history and romantic economics.

Also, be it noted, he read the Bible—not to get propaganda out of it, but for his soul’s health. For the curious fact is that, in spite of his parents’ scepticism, he lived and died a devout believer. When he was seventeen the Moody and Sankey Mission arrived, evoking an outburst of religious enthusiasm in the West of Scotland, especially among young men, that endured at fever heat for several years. In due course Keir Hardie succumbed to the general influence and became “converted”. His choice of a denominational connection—for of course he had none through his parents—was interesting and significant. He became a Morisonian. This sect (now merged in the Congregational Union of Scotland) had been founded early in the ’forties by the Rev. James Morison, a young man of considerable talent and learning and most lovable personality, who was deposed from the ministry of the Secession Church for preaching the Gospel in a fashion that was deemed to be Arminian, and therefore heretical according to the Westminster

Confession of Faith. From small beginnings the Evangelical Union (as it was officially called) grew and flourished in a modest way chiefly in the West of Scotland. By orthodox Presbyterians it was regarded with benevolent contempt. Morisonians were spoken of with a slight pursing of the lips as "moral" and "worthy" people, the implied reservation being that the spiritual condition of those who repudiated the doctrine of election and predestination was more than questionable, no matter how Christian might appear their behaviour. This attitude of superior toleration was preserved by those within the fold even when Arminianism had become a commonplace of the Presbyterian pulpit, the reason being that at bottom it was not doctrinal at all but social and traditional. The Morisonians were mostly humble folk, and they had abandoned the Presbyterian order for "independency", a thing that, according to Scottish standards, is peculiarly deplorable inasmuch as, unlike prelacy, it is practised by people who ought to know better. Keir Hardie's reasons for joining the sect are obvious enough. For one thing he was constitutionally a dissenter. He liked being in a minority, and the smaller the minority the better he liked it. For another thing, though he had given up his parents' unbelief, the sentiment of his upbringing remained in the form of an antipathy to Presbyterianism as the religion of the "bosses", which it undoubtedly was. But

the main reason was that Hardie was a very simple, sincere and devout soul. He had been "saved" on the basis of God's free grace to all mankind through the death of Christ, and naturally he preferred to be associated with those who gave that doctrine the central place in their creed and were not, like Presbyterians, obliged to apologise for mentioning it. As a corollary to his church connection he became a Good Templar, a zealous advocacy of total abstinence from liquor being regarded as one of the essential activities of a redeemed soul.

It is important to understand the character of Keir Hardie's religious beliefs, for they are the clue to the origins of his political creed. Generally speaking it may be said that the Moody and Sankey revival was bad for the social conscience in the industrial West. It gave the middle classes, who were powerfully affected by it, a very religious excuse for ignoring the problem of industrial poverty in the sense of applying their intelligence to it, though there was no lack of fussy and sterile philanthropy. For if you really believe that those who are not "saved" will inevitably go to a ghastly and eternal doom, and if at the same time you believe that salvation is to be had for the asking, it becomes your supreme duty to see that as many as possible of your fellow-men are made aware of the Almighty's handsome offer. Nothing else will matter much by the side of this fatal opportunity. You will

not be moved by the nakedness and hunger of your neighbour except in so far as these, being presumptive evidence of sin, prompt you to inquire into the state of his soul. You will give him an old suit of clothes and a plain but wholesome meal, not primarily because his body is cold and hungry, but because if you don't he will probably go away and sin some more, possibly to his soul's damnation. True, you may deplore his poverty, but it will not suggest to you any general problem or self-questioning. You will reason quite correctly—especially if your logic is supported by a comfortable income—that poverty at the worst is only a temporary inconvenience, of no great consequence when compared with the unalterable everlasting issue of sin and salvation. This was the perfectly respectable (as it then seemed) attitude of many wealthy Glasgow men, who spent large sums of money and did not spare themselves great personal inconvenience in order that the poor might have the Gospel preached to them. But one who was himself a poor man, especially one in Keir Hardie's position, was bound to extract a very different philosophy from the doctrine of free salvation. He was bound to interpret the temporal by analogy with the eternal. If it were true, as the Calvinists taught, that Christ died only for the elect, inequality and privilege were inherent in the order of Divine Providence, and man must accept his destiny here and hereafter,

world without end, Amen. But if the Calvinists were wrong, if, as Keir Hardie with all the earnestness of his earnest nature believed, Christ died for the whole of Adam's race, the case for privilege and inequality disappeared. For if God has given His Eternal Gift to the many, why should it be supposed that He has reserved His temporal blessings for the few?

That Keir Hardie reasoned out his position so abstractly and briefly is improbable; but there is no doubt that some such naïve *reductio ad absurdum* represents the process by which he gradually reached the conclusion that men have their material as well as their spiritual salvation within their power, and that nothing stands between them and the enjoyment of God's mercies in either kind but their own perverse will to perdition. Conversion is indicated in both cases. Any doubts Hardie may have had about the legitimacy of the conclusion were removed by Ruskin. It is interesting to note in passing that a young Free Church probationer, Henry Drummond, who also accepted with his whole heart the neo-evangelical theology and who was engaged in home mission work in Glasgow when Keir Hardie was organising miners in Lanarkshire, found his thought moving in precisely the opposite direction—not deducing an earthly paradise from his faith, but building up his Heaven by induction from earthly analogies of doubtful character. It was a case of two

points careering round a circle in reverse ways. Ultimately they coincided. Drummond before he died found himself committed to the Socialist position. Some years elapsed before Hardie's views crystallised sufficiently to enable him to proclaim himself a Socialist, and even then they did not seem to him to constitute any reason for ceasing to describe himself as a Radical supporter of the Liberal party. The break with Liberalism, when it did come, was due to purely personal considerations that developed in the later 'eighties.

During the ten years that intervened, the name of Keir Hardie became familiar to the public. Shortly after he settled at Cadzow, the coal-owners announced a further reduction of wages. The miners decided that they must fight, and Hardie, whose little shop had become the focus of the agitation in Lanarkshire, was appointed agent. The stoppage that followed did not last long. The men were beaten. But it was agreed that Hardie had done his work well, and the reputation he had acquired brought him an invitation from the Ayrshire miners which induced him to leave Cadzow for Old Cumnock, the village that was his home for the rest of his life. His migration to Ayrshire was quickly signalled by the "tattie strike" of 1881, so called because the strikers, having no union and no funds, had to subsist on potatoes supplied by the charity of the local shopkeepers and farmers. On these scanty rations, plentifully

seasoned with the earnest and sometimes impressive exhortations of their leader, they stuck it out for ten weeks. A glorious August morning and the strains of a brass band had heartened them for the struggle, and "the smiling of fortune beguiling" in the guise of an exceptionally fine autumn encouraged them to continue it. But the stars were against them. A prolonged diet of potatoes is a poor provision against a Scotch November, and with the approach of winter the strike collapsed. Hardly had the pits been restarted when a sudden improvement in trade set in which caused the owners to raise wages. The men were jubilant. It was no use telling them that they were sharing in the general prosperity of the industry. They were convinced that the state of trade had nothing to do with it: Keir Hardie and the strike had done it by putting the fear of the Lord into the hearts of the bosses. The task of organising a union, therefore, which occupied the agent for the next few years, was begun under happy auspices.

How Hardie lived during his early days in Ayrshire is a mystery which even his official biographer has been unable to fathom. Frugal and self-denying as he was, it is difficult to conceive how he and his wife—for he married on settling at Old Cumnock—could subsist on the small and irregular payments he got as miners' agent. After a year or two, however, his position improved. He became factotum to the *Cumnock*

News, and that led to a connection with its parent newspaper, the *Ardrossan Herald*, a Liberal organ of considerable influence in North Ayrshire. With the full approval of his employer, an enthusiastic Gladstonian, he took an active part in local Radical politics. By the end of the year 1886 Mr. Keir Hardie felt justified in taking himself seriously. He was making a modest but steady income as a journalist, and he and his employer were on terms of mutual esteem. He was known as an earnest and godly young married man with a growing family. His position as a Labour leader was considerable. He was not only secretary to the Ayrshire Miners' Union, but secretary to the inchoate Scottish Miners' Federation. In the Cumnock district he had become a local hero.

Becoming a hero, even a local one, involves a spiritual change. One sees things in a light not vouchsafed in pre-heroic days. Notions that for long have maintained a shadowy and questionable existence as dreams and grumbles suddenly acquire a solid and respectable standing in one's scheme of life. So it was with Keir Hardie. The Reform Act of 1885 had inspired him with a dream about the political status of the working classes, and also with a grumble about the Liberal party. The industrial workers, being now enfranchised in the counties as well as in the boroughs, were in a position to dominate national politics, if only they would put forth their strength

as the middle classes had done after 1832 with results very beneficial to their own interests. Now it was the working classes' turn. To vote was not enough: they must get into Parliament as well. It was true that of recent years the Liberal party in the House of Commons had included a number of "Labour" Radicals like George Odger, Thomas Burt, Henry Broadhurst and Alexander Macdonald, but the party authorities were inclined to be stingy in the matter of Labour representation and would give away no more than they could help. Scotland had no share in the meagre allowance. Even Macdonald, a Lanarkshire miner from Keir Hardie's own district, had sat for an English borough. In Keir Hardie's view, what the Liberal party needed was a Radical "revival", and, having regard to his local success as a Labour leader, he saw no reason why he should not start it himself, with Ruskinian socialism as the special evangel of the movement. At the moment it happened that a real Liberal candidate was wanted for North Ayrshire. The sitting member, the Hon. H. F. Eliot, who had been elected as a Liberal in 1885, had gone Unionist, and the distracted condition of the party had operated to give him an unopposed return in 1886. But a Gladstonian candidate was to be put in the field at the next election. In these circumstances the name of Mr. James Keir Hardie, journalist, of Old Cumnock, was put before the Liberal Association

with a demand that he should be adopted as their candidate. The proposal was not well received.

It is the quality of Englishmen that they can be serious without being unseasonable. They have a sense of objective situation and can bide their time. Among Scotsmen it is a comparatively rare gift—rare enough, indeed, to make it a constant source of wonder how they ever acquired their reputation for shrewdness.¹ Like the Frenchman, the Scot when he is very much in earnest about anything sees it *sub specie aeternitatis*, sheathed in timeless logic, supreme over all temporal considerations, and any divergence from his view on the part of other people is put down, not to lack of appreciation—for that is inconceivable—but to interested motives. He becomes resentful, querulous, even vindictive. This unhappy temper has been the bane of Scottish ecclesiastical politics. Just a little common sense would have told Keir Hardie that he had chosen the worst possible moment for pressing his claims. The Liberal party, staggering under the weight of an Irish policy that threatened to crush it, was not likely to listen to a proposal that it should carry a little Labour socialism as well. Nor was the mood of “Labour” itself favourable, for the working classes were inflamed by sectarian passion, and in the West of Scotland in particular had been

¹ An exception must be made in favour of the Aberdonian, whose psychology in this as in other respects is by far the most “English” in Scotland.

stampeded by the Unionist cry of "Home Rule means Rome rule".

To all such considerations Hardie was blind, and he had the additional affliction of a very aggressive "inferiority complex". His failure to get the Liberal nomination suggested to him nothing but a middle-class objection to working men in Parliament, and the fact that the person preferred to him was an affluent baronet was not calculated to modify his view or improve his temper. He was put into that dire frame of mind that drives Scotsmen to seek consolation from the only approach to a bad poem that Burns ever wrote :

For a' that and a' that,
 Their dignities and a' that,
 The pith o' sense and pride o' worth
 Are higher ranks than a' that.

As a delegate to the Trade Union Congress of 1887 he took the opportunity of saying what he thought about the direction of the Liberal party. But although he now proclaimed himself a Socialist and delivered a heated attack on Broadhurst, he did not profess to be anything more than a disgruntled Radical who wanted to see a powerful Labour "cave" in the Liberal party. The idea of Labour representation independent of Liberalism had not then occurred to him, and it might never have occurred to him but for Mr. Schnadhorst's little blunder in the following year.

For in 1888, while he was still smarting from his rebuff at the hands of the North Ayrshire Liberals, the representation of his native constituency, Mid-Lanark, was vacated by the resignation of Mr. Stephen Mason, a member of the advanced Radical wing of his party. A hint of Mr. Mason's resignation had reached a much respected Glasgow Irishman (afterwards for many years a Nationalist M.P.) who was keenly interested in Labour representation. This gentleman at once telegraphed for Mr. Cunninghame Graham, who then sat for the North-West Division of Lanarkshire as a Labour Liberal. Mr. Cunninghame Graham hurried to Glasgow, and steps were at once taken to secure the Liberal nomination for Keir Hardie. Keir Hardie sent in his application to the Liberal Association. It was a very civil statement of his eminent qualifications—he was “a lifelong Liberal”, “a staunch Home Ruler” and all the rest of it. Unfortunately, although no formal decision had been taken, the Mid-Lanark Liberal Association were already committed to the Whips' nominee, Captain Sinclair (afterwards Lord Pentland). In addition Sir Charles Cameron's organs, the *North British Daily Mail* and the *Weekly Mail*, were strongly pressing the claims of a third person. But Keir Hardie was not disposed to quit the field. His view of the situation was expressed in *The Miner*, a little propaganda journal he had established at Old Cumnock on his own account. “Much

depends", he wrote, "on the position taken up by the Liberal Association. It may or may not select a Labour candidate. In either case, my advice would be that the Labour candidate should be put forward. Better split the party now, if there is to be a split, than at a General Election, *and if the Labour party only make their power felt now, terms will not be wanting when the General Election comes.*" These words admit of no misunderstanding. The Liberal party was to be forced into making a deal.

Keir Hardie's backers, however, did not take the situation so light-heartedly. A split vote was a serious matter to be avoided, if possible. At this juncture Henry Drummond intervened with a proposal for a round-table conference at his house, which was accepted. The negotiators were Drummond, Lady Aberdeen, Captain Sinclair, Mr. Cunninghame Graham and his Irish friend. Keir Hardie apparently was not invited. After some discussion Captain Sinclair agreed not to press his official claim. The various branch associations were to be allowed a free hand. The way now seemed clear for Hardie, for it was generally agreed that the *Mail's* nominee had no chance. And then the unexpected happened. A rank outsider appeared in the shape of a young Welsh barrister, Philipps by name in those days but now Lord St. Davids, who brought confusion upon the well-laid scheme. Mr. Philipps, with the persuasiveness of his race, stampeded the Mid-Lanark Liberals and secured the nomination

over Keir Hardie and the newspaper nominee, Mr. Macliver.

Keir Hardie was chagrined beyond expression. He began to see red. He would go to the poll in any event. His determination to that effect was sealed by the arrival of £400 towards his election expenses from a well-meaning body that called itself the Labour Electoral Association. T. R. Threlfall, the Association's secretary, came into the constituency to lend his aid, and also, it may be surmised, to keep an eye on the disbursements. Lying in wait for him were Mr. Schnadhorst, Sir G. O. Trevelyan and Mr. C. A. V. Conybeare, with proposals for a deal. After some hours' haggling the terms upon which the Labour candidate was to be withdrawn were agreed. The subsequent interview in which Keir Hardie was apprised of the bargain was so unpleasant that within a few hours poor Mr. Threlfall had fled across the Border never to return. Mr. Schnadhorst tried next, but Keir Hardie wrathfully refused to meet him. Eventually, however, he was persuaded to see Sir George Trevelyan, whose urbanity mollified his manners but did not abate his resentment at the affront he conceived to have been put upon him. The offer of a seat at the General Election and a very decent little salary out of the party funds was rejected as "offensive".

A harder trafficker in human nature than Sir George would have taken the proper measure

of the situation. He would have seen that the uncouth, frowning, rather stupid young man who confronted him was impossible to bargain with at that moment. Sweet reasonableness, such as Sir George purveyed, was wasted on one who, being neither sweet nor reasonable himself, and having had little experience of either quality in others at the pithead, inferred nothing but a design on the part of "English swells" to diddle Scotch working men in general and Jamie Keir Hardie in particular. Well, he would teach them the lesson of Bannockburn over again in Mid-Lanark. They would soon enough sue for peace. With a man of this type, especially one who has a colliers' brass band inside his head braying "Scots wha hae", discussion is out of the question. He is probably dangerous, and the only safe course is to let him have his own way. It is a mistake to anticipate that he will take advantage of a concession to make fresh demands. He is not at all selfish, or even self-seeking, but he is self-centred, and the point at issue, which to you may seem trivial, is to him a point of honour. Once honour is satisfied he is liable to become quite manageable. If circumstances compel you to deny him, do not let the matter end there. At the earliest opportunity put on hypocritical sackcloth and ashes and you will be forgiven. On no account leave him any occasion to regret his obstinacy; for according to his canons of reasoning the event

that proves him a fool proves you a knave, and so he will spend the rest of his life planning mischief against you.

The Liberal party failed to realise these useful truths. They could not, of course, withdraw the adopted candidate, nor did Keir Hardie expect them to. But he left Sir George Trevelyan's presence full of confidence and valour, being persuaded that as soon as the election was over negotiations would be reopened, and that there was nothing to be lost and much to be gained by a demonstration at the poll. There was a remote possibility that he might be returned. More probably he would split the Liberal vote sufficiently to give the seat to the Unionist. In any case he would get enough support to teach the English mandarins the meaning of *Nemo me impune lacessit*. There he judged badly. To carry out his scheme he needed the Irish vote, or a substantial part of it, but his efforts in that direction were in vain. The Irish miners were not going to give away a Home Rule seat simply because some Scotsmen were at odds with official Liberalism. Mr. Philipps was returned, and Keir Hardie was at the bottom of the poll with less than 700 votes. The Liberal party felt that such a result did not call for further action. A little reflection, a little analysis of the figures would have shown them their error. Allowance being made for the heavy Irish vote which swelled the Liberal poll, it would have been

found that, without any organisation to help him, Keir Hardie detached 20 per cent of the native Liberal vote, and that his 600 odd represented the main body of the non-Irish miner electors.

Immediately after the Mid-Lanark by-election Keir Hardie got a few sympathisers to meet in Glasgow and form a Scottish Labour party. The new body professed Socialist principles, but its inspiration was nationalistic. There is no reason to regard it in its inception as anything but part of the simple plan for forcing the hand of the Liberal party authorities which a few weeks before Keir Hardie had outlined in *The Miner*. Formerly, however, his idea had been to carry on the agitation through the medium of the Labour Electoral Association, but, as we have seen, his subsequent experience of that body had not been to his liking and had deepened his distrust of all things English. He was now convinced that Scottish Labour interests would continue to be neglected unless they were pressed by a militant Scottish organisation free of English entanglements. Unfortunately the *personnel* of the new organisation was feeble. Mr. Cunninghame Graham, it is true, was a member. His presence added picturesqueness, but was not calculated to impress anybody with the representative character of the Scottish Labour party. As a political manoeuvre the party was an abject failure. It evoked no

response from the Liberal headquarters. Keir Hardie waited in vain for a new offer of terms, and his sense of grievance deepened with every day that passed. He became angry and abusive. "The newly enfranchised workers", he wrote, "are being used for selfish purposes by those who are more intelligent than themselves." That seemed to him to be the only possible inference from the facts of his recent experience. Here was he, secretary to the Scottish Miners' Federation, and admittedly entitled to express the sentiment of a large body of working-class electors. He had made a demand, a very reasonable demand, for some Parliamentary representation of Scottish Labour, which, for all their democratic professions, the Liberal party treated with contempt. When they thought Mid-Lanark was in danger they had tried to buy him off with promises and fine words, but once the danger was past they had no more interest in him. That the Liberal party contained many good Radicals and sincere democrats he was willing to admit, but what could they do so long as the direction of the party remained a close oligarchy that jealously maintained the Whig tradition of government by a ruling class? The workers might try to capture the party, but they would fail because their simplicity was no match for the secular cunning of the Whigs. The only way was to raze the edifice to the ground and build up a really democratic party in its place.

Hardie would probably have arrived at the same conclusion even if he had never heard of Socialism; but if confirmation were needed, Socialism to his mind provided it. What was his unhappy personal experience of Liberal duplicity but an example of the impossibility of co-operation between the workers and a *bourgeois* party?

From the year 1889, when he went to Paris to take part in the foundation of the Second International, Hardie was a fully-fledged Socialist waging inexorable war against the Liberal party. But it was no part of his plan in those early days to take the Red bonnets over the Border. The Scottish Labour party was conceived, not as the nucleus of a British Labour party, but as a movement for the emancipation of Scotland from the tyranny of English political ideas as expressed in Liberalism. Like all anti-English movements in Scotland, it was obliged to look to the Continent for its ideas. Hence the aggressive Socialism that it preached from the beginning. The same phenomenon is being repeated to-day on an even more striking scale. The Labour party having become an English institution, the patriotic fervour of Clydeside now runs in Communist channels, for no purpose but to assert the national differentia.

It was well for Keir Hardie—whether it was to the advantage of British politics is another question—that he was not permitted to continue

in the political career he had planned for himself, which consisted of perambulating Scotland with the Red flag in one hand and the "blue blanket" in the other. His fellow-countrymen were deplorably apathetic. No Scottish constituency seemed to feel that Mr. Cunninghame Graham needed his or anybody else's company at Westminster. When at the General Election of 1892 this Scottish patriot and sworn foe of Liberalism did get into Parliament, it was for a London constituency and with the support of a Liberal party organisation. There was a "cave" of South-West Ham Radicals who were not satisfied that the official Liberal candidate shared their enthusiasm for the economics of Henry George. Why they should have thought of Keir Hardie as a suitable person to explain the beauties of the Single-tax to the West Ham electors does not appear, but choose him they did. He travelled from Old Cumnock to South-West Ham comforted by the assurance that he was practically certain to keep the Liberal out. As it happened, the Liberal did not need any keeping out. He went out flatly and finally in the middle of the campaign by dying. Keir Hardie, in the language of the day, was on velvet. The local Liberals, being unable to put a new candidate in the field with any chance of success, had no option but to concentrate on the "Labour" candidate, who at least could be relied upon to go into the Liberal lobby on all vital occasions. The result was the celebrated

bit of clowning by which the member for South-West Ham saw fit to advertise his arrival at Westminster. Wearing a cap instead of his customary bowler, he drove up in a two-horse charabanc with a bugler on the box. And is it not written of those who disfigure their faces and sound a trumpet before them that they have their reward? Keir Hardie certainly had it. He was seen of men and newspaper reporters, and caused quite a number of old ladies to pass a sleepless night. He was utterly ravished by his new importance, and assumed the air he deemed appropriate to a Man of Destiny. His vision splendid was no longer bounded by the Scottish horizon. It was right that the salvation should be preached to the Scot first, but had not the oppressed wage-slaves of England cried to him to come over and help them? The Scottish Labour party must be enlarged into an independent Labour party of Great Britain.

And so at a conference held at Bradford in 1893 the I.L.P. was born. Keir Hardie was not by any means its only begetter, but being its sole representative in Parliament and editor of its official organ, the *Labour Leader*, he enjoyed most of the honour of paternity. As chairman of the party for the first seven years of its existence he prescribed a policy for it which had at least the virtue of simplicity, viz. to preach Socialism all the time and to annoy the Liberals whenever opportunity offered. The former business was

transacted very diligently and not without effect at street corners. The Socialism was not always good Socialism, but there was no mistake about the unctïon with which it was delivered. Keir Hardie saw to that. His own exhortations were much admired and set the standard for his disciples. The quality of his prophetic gift may be judged from the following words addressed to the electors of Merthyr Tydvil :

What is Socialism? It is the return to that kindly phase of life in which there shall be no selfish lust for gold, with every man trampling down his neighbour in his mad rush to get most. Socialism is the reign of human love in room of hate. Socialism means that the land of Wales will again belong to its people. Who made the land private property? Who but the robber band who crossed the marches, plundering, burning and slaying as they went, leaving a trail of red blood and black woe to mark their track as they despoiled a high-souled people of land and liberty? And shall the people of Wales tamely submit to see the land of their fathers remain for ever in the hands of the spoiler? Socialism says no. The first birthright of a free people is to own the land on which they live and from which they draw their food.

Socialism says that in addition to the land, the pits and railways and docks and ironworks and steelworks and tinworks should also all belong to the people and not to a few only. If this were the case, there would be no poverty nor slums, nor half-starved children nor aged poor, nor heart-broken mothers in Wales; nor do I think there would be any drunkenness in Wales; and the ugliness and squalor which meet you at every turn in some of the most beautiful valleys in the world would disappear, the rivers would run pure and clear as they did of yore, and woods would again cover the mountain sides in which

many birds would make sweet melody, whilst in spring the lambkins would sport on the lea, and in the summer the full-uddered kine would come home lowing in the gloaming; and in winter the log would glow on the fire the while that the youths and maidens made glad the heart with mirth and song, and there would be beauty and joy everywhere, for men would be living as brothers in unity and not tearing each other like beasts of prey.

From which it appears that the speaker was acquainted with the works of the Ettrick Shepherd, David of Israel, Lord Macaulay, Dr. Watts, Mr. Ira D. Sankey and other romantic poets. In 1900 the electors of Merthyr showed their appreciation of such brave words by sending him back to the House of Commons, from which the fickleness of West Ham had exiled him since 1895.

The other and more spectacular department of I.L.P. activity consisted in queering the Liberal pitch at by-elections by putting up candidates who could not possibly get in themselves but would probably succeed in their real objective of keeping the Liberal out. The wisdom of the policy was sometimes questioned even by Hardie's most earnest supporters, but he insisted upon it. As Mr. Squeers remarked when he thrashed Smike in the hackney cab, it was inconvenient but satisfying. The Liberal newspapers protested, at first angrily with suggestions of "Tory gold", and then, when that came to look silly, with tearful argumentation about the folly of what they called "splitting the Progressive vote".

Keir Hardie didn't care what they said. He knew that he was not to be bought by gold, either Tory or Liberal, and as for splitting the Progressive vote, that was exactly what he intended, because he believed it to be the only way of liberating democracy from the unconscionable tyranny of the Whigs. The new party of progress must represent a clean break with the Whig tradition, a repudiation of the bad old past and a steadfast outlook on the glorious future. The future, as William James has observed, has a great attraction for idealistic minds because it is a "soft option". Keir Hardie wallowed in soft options. The past has the awkward character of being real, a cruel agglomeration of hard lacerating facts, which soft minds like Hardie's have always sought to belie by the pretence that only the recent past is bad, and if you could only cut it out and short-circuit the present with the remoter ages all would be well for the future.

Fortunately for Labour there were a number of men who, having some glimmerings of political sagacity and political insight, realised that the movement needed something more than the mixture of rancour and unctious supplied by Keir Hardie and the I.L.P. To keep Liberals out might be good, but to get Labour men in would be better. A severely business-like organisation called the Labour Representation Committee was set up, and things began to move. Within a few years the Parliamentary Labour party had come

into being—a body very different in temper and outlook from the creature of Keir Hardie's dreams. For auld lang syne he was permitted to lead it for a session; then gently, slowly, but irresistibly, he was propelled towards the shelf. In his heart of hearts he knew what was happening, but his natural vanity enabled him to bear it. Parliament, he freely admitted, was not his *métier*, for what prophetic soul could function under its petty limitations? Of his prophetic vocation he had not a shadow of doubt, and his practical-minded English colleagues were only too anxious to encourage an illusion that pleased him and allowed them to get on with the job. He was at great pains to look the part. In 1906, when the Labour party "arrived", he was barely fifty, but by cultivating his hair and beard—there is much prophetic virtue in a beard—he contrived to give the impression of sixty-five. The tweed cap of 1892 had been discarded in favour of a broad-brimmed sombrero. He wore a flowing tie and smoked a corn-cob pipe. The result was a tasteful human composition featuring Lord Tennyson, William Morris, Walt Whitman, Elijah the Tishbite, Sir Hall Caine, and (though it rather spoiled the general effect) a certain Scotsman named James Keir Hardie.

O sancta simplicitas that thought to have found the mantle of a proletarian prophet in the cast-off rags of Victorian Bohemia! *O sancta simplicitas*

that, with slow but fell loquacity, unexampled dullness and great audibility, sought to rouse the House of Commons to the urgency of building Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land ! *O sancta simplicitas* that could imagine hard-headed Englishmen shedding the political wisdom of centuries at the bidding of a bumptious woolly-witted Scotch collier who seemed to have been specially created by Providence to confirm the fine old English tradition that Scotsmen have no sense of humour ! *O sancta simplicitas* of the young lady of Riga !

The initial trouble with Keir Hardie was that he had been brought up in the superstition, still widely held north of the Tweed, that almost any Scotsman is superior to every Englishman whatsoever in intellect, morals and spirituality. As the average Scotsman's acquaintance with the English was confined until recent years to commercial travellers, shooting tenants, Parliamentary candidates, and the officers and men of Highland regiments, the error is perhaps excusable. But it is none the less an error, and, to do the Scotsman justice, it is an error of which every Scotsman with any pretensions to common sense disabuses himself before he is many miles over the Border. But common sense Keir Hardie had not, any more than he had the salt and salacious humour by which a merciful Providence has redeemed Scotsmen at large from being the dreariest race of prigs west of Suez. To national conceit he

added the big endowment of personal vanity to which sufficient reference has been made. Sincerity he certainly had, and good intentions, but as his sincerity manifested itself in a petty fanaticism, and his good intentions usually took a spiteful turn, the value of these qualities is subject to a large discount. A genteel taste in reading—"only that and nothing more"—constituted his intellectual equipment for the task of reforming British politics. Altogether it was a sad business, but Providence was not too unkind. The Prophet of Labour was permitted to depart in peace in 1915 in his sixtieth year. He lived to see the Great War, and its bloody proof that the salvation of humanity was not the easy matter that he had been preaching as gospel for thirty years broke his simple heart, and he died. Perhaps it was all for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The Parliamentary Labour party had got beyond his comprehension. Some of its members serenely joined a "Jingo" War Cabinet, drawing their ministerial salaries and grumbling in private about the super-tax like the honest Englishmen they were, while others sate glumly in the wilderness. That was bad—very bad. But at least he died in time to be spared the humiliation of seeing the Whigs, to whose destruction he had devoted his days, taking office in a Labour Government as if it were the most natural thing in the world. *Tamen usque recurrent.*

LORD OVERTOUN

“Never—I should warn you first—
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well.”

JOHN CAMPBELL WHITE, Baron Overtoun of Overtoun in the county of Dumbarton (cr. 1893), died *sine prole* at his Dumbartonshire residence at 5.30 A.M. on Saturday, February 15, 1908, in his sixty-fifth year. On the previous Saturday his Lordship had motored up the Vale of Leven to visit his uncle, a gentleman over ninety years of age, as a result of which he contracted a chill. On the Sabbath, though complaining of illness, he was in his accustomed place at the morning diet of worship at Dumbarton United Free High Church, and in the evening he conducted his Bible class as usual, but on the following day pneumonia supervened. His Lordship's robust constitution caused hopes to be entertained that the dread disease might successfully be resisted, but these were doomed to disappointment, and his illness terminated fatally, as stated.

From the pulpit and press references, sympathetic as they were innumerable, to the sad event, we cull the following as typical: “The

news of Lord Overtoun's death will be received with an almost personal sorrow in every part of Scotland, for his princely generosity flowed through channels that conveyed its beneficent influence to the remotest corners of the country." Such a tribute, paid as it was in a leading article by a great newspaper which notoriously did not see always eye to eye with his Lordship in regard to the leading ecclesiastical and political questions of the day, is a striking testimony to the high place the deceased nobleman held in the esteem and affections of his fellow-countrymen irrespective of class, creed or political colour. It would have been strange had it been otherwise. The proprietor of a large and successful manufacturing business, the inheritor and—for no man ever more worthily exemplified the truth of the Scriptural adage that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich"—the creator of vast wealth, combining as he did business acumen of no mean order with the greatest religious activity in a manner that commanded universal admiration, John Campbell White was indeed a man remarkable among his compeers. He filled the varied rôle of merchant prince, county magnate, Churchman, evangelist and philanthropist, and later took his place among the legislators of the Upper House of Parliament, this last perhaps in a less degree than his other activities, though even in the House of Lords his influence was exerted on behalf of every good cause.

But the high honour which came to Mr. Campbell White (as he then was) in his fiftieth year, through the instrumentality of Mr. Gladstone, was no more than a timely recognition by the Sovereign of noble and unstinted public service rendered from youth upwards. His devotion to the Free (afterwards United Free) Church may be described as inbred. Born on November 11, 1843, he was literally cradled in the Disruption, his parents having "come out" on that historic occasion just six months before his birth, thereby sacrificing their personal convenience to their convictions and throwing their great influence upon the side of the dissenting body. His father, the late Mr. James White of Shawfield, was at that time practising as a solicitor in Glasgow, but shortly afterwards exchanged law for industry, becoming senior partner in the firm of J. & J. White, chemical manufacturers, Shawfield, Rutherglen, and a highly respected member of the business community of Glasgow, to which the ancient and royal burgh of Rutherglen is adjacent. His mother was a daughter of the late John Campbell, Esq., of Barnhill, Sheriff of Renfrew, and a sister of the late Neil Campbell, Esq., Sheriff of Ayr, a distinguished leader of the Scots Bar and for many years adviser of the Free Church, and was furthermore a woman of great force of character and strong religious convictions. Of the household at Hayfield, Rutherglen, and afterwards at Overtoun, the

palatial Dumbartonshire residence to which Mr. James White removed in 1863, it may indeed be said in the noble words of the National Bard,

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.

There can be no doubt that early training and influence gave the future Lord Overtoun the bent which most characterised his career. He was educated at the Glasgow Academy, and thence proceeded to Glasgow University, Mr. James White, with that proverbial Scottish veneration for learning, being strongly of opinion that a knowledge of the liberal arts is not only not prejudicial but may even be advantageous to a young man designed for commercial pursuits, provided, of course, that he is of the right stamp. Young Mr. Campbell White (as he then was) pursued his university studies at the old College Buildings in High Street, soon to be swept away by the irresistible march of progress and replaced by the magnificent pile with which the genius of the late Sir Gilbert Scott, R.A., has since crowned the romantic heights of Gilmorehill. He showed a marked bent for science, taking prizes in Logic and Natural Philosophy. The latter important subject was then in the distinguished hands of Professor William Thomson, now better known as Lord Kelvin, for whom all his life Lord Overtoun entertained a warm personal regard. It was always a matter for keen regret to Lord

Overtoun that, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, he was unable to accompany Lord Kelvin (or Professor Thomson as he then was) as his assistant on the historic voyage of the *Great Eastern* to lay the Atlantic cable, but in point of fact the post had been filled before his application was received. The association of the two men (each so eminent in their different spheres) was to be renewed later, however, in the House of Lords—though not of course on the same side of it—and it must have afforded the great scientist the keenest satisfaction to be able, within a year of his own elevation, to welcome to the Gilded Chamber one of his old students who had also attained distinction, though in another walk of life.

But, while as a young man Lord Overtoun may have been sensible to the attraction of a scientific career, it was ever a cardinal point in his faith to be content with that position in life to which an All-wise Providence had called him. Accordingly, after taking the degree of M.A. he entered as his father's only son his father's exceedingly prosperous establishment, and in 1867 was assumed as a partner. In the same year he married Grace, daughter of the late Mr. James H. McClure, head of an eminent firm of solicitors in Glasgow. Lady Overtoun was her husband's devoted helpmeet and the tireless coadjutor in all his manifold beneficent activities, but there was no issue of the union. In due course, upon

the demise of his father and uncle, Mr. Campbell White (as he then was) became sole proprietor of Messrs. J. & J. White's vast enterprise, reputed to be the largest of its kind in the world. The firm's principal output is chrome, a commodity which, needless to say, is of prime importance to the leather trade. Under Lord Overtoun's wise and capable direction its prosperity continued undiminished and large profits were realised. Owing to the magnitude of the undertaking and the unceasing demands upon his time and energy which his philanthropic and religious work involved, his Lordship for many years prior to his death devolved the entire superintendence of the Shawfield works upon two of his nephews, but he continued to take an active interest in the commercial side of the business up to the very last, attending regularly in his office in West George Street, Glasgow. But although no longer resident in Rutherglen or concerning himself with the actual processes of chrome manufacture, Lord Overtoun was never unmindful of the royal burgh with which his family fortunes had been so happily associated, and whose ancient motto *Ex fumo fama* derived a new and substantial significance from the Shawfield chemical works. Among his many benefactions were a Public Park and an Institute, with reading-room, gymnasium, baths, etc., and for many years he maintained at his own expense a Bible-woman, a Scripture-reader and a trained nurse.

Preaching from Romans xii. 2 on the Sabbath following his Lordship's passing away, a large number of distinguished Presbyterian divines observed that seldom, if ever, had the Apostle's pregnant epitome of the Christian life been more nobly exemplified than in the life of Lord Overton. Nor was this less than the truth concerning this exceedingly rich man who had now undoubtedly entered the kingdom of Heaven. Not by any means slothful in business, religion and philanthropy were the chief outlets of his Lordship's marvellous activity. On these departments of thought and life he bestowed unceasing attention. One of his published addresses contains these striking words: "I feel strongly that everyone in a community is bound by the highest obligations, whatever his position be, to try to live, not for self alone, but for others and to seek as he best can to promote their welfare." His parents by precept and example had laid the foundations of a profoundly religious character, to which was added a note of sincere personal conviction born of the great revival movements of last century. It was during the revival of 1859-60 that his first deep religious impressions were received, deepened as they were by the revival influence of Mr. D. L. Moody in 1874. Through the guidance of that great American evangelist, John Campbell White (as he then was) was brought prominently out as a leader in evangelical Christianity in Scotland, a position

he held through his days of exalted honour to the last. Both at Rutherglen and Dumbarton he was, in his youth, a Sabbath school teacher. He was an elder in the United Free High Church, Dumbarton, and down to the last he conscientiously discharged the duties of the office. The Bible class he conducted for nearly forty years was a remarkable organisation which, from small beginnings, had latterly a roll of 600 names.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the part played by Lord Overtoun in that branch of the Church of Scotland with which he was all his life associated. He was for more than a generation a prominent, though as a rule silent, figure in the General Assembly of the Free (afterwards the United Free) Church, sitting invariably as a representative elder from the Presbytery of Dumbarton. Save in one important respect, hereinafter to be mentioned, he figured chiefly as convener of the Livingstonia Mission of the Church, for which he had an hereditary attachment, his father having held that position until his death in 1884. Under all circumstances it was perhaps only to be expected that none should know better than Lord Overtoun the history and details of the celebrated Central African mission; but he never visited the stations, though often pressed to do so. Precluded by his numerous business engagements from taking a larger part in the administrative work of the Church, Lord Overtoun, like his father, preferred

to be known as the cheerful giver rather than as the Church leader. His great services to religion are to be measured in terms far more eloquent than frequent participation in debates and attendance at committee meetings. In all reverence, be it said, his Lordship furnished a heartening illustration of the motto, "Money talks". As we have seen, the spread of the Gospel in Africa held a special place in his affections, and he rendered memorable service to the cause of Christianity in the Dark Continent and elsewhere by his munificence, always coming to the rescue of threatened deficits in the funds—a contingency of unhappily frequent occurrence in the mission-field, its being a noteworthy fact that even in the darkest continents both money and the lack of money speak as loudly as in our own enlightened land.

One of the largest contributors to the Sustentation, or Central Fund, as it is now called, which is the financial mainstay of the United Free Church, Lord Overtoun's purse was ever at the disposal of any Church object, great or small. No humble Highland minister seeking aid for urgent repairs to church or manse ever approached the impressive portals of Overtoun House unbuoyed by hope, or departed thence without a remembrance of his noble host in the form of a treasured leaf from his Lordship's cheque-book. Is it, we ask, any wonder that his Lordship became almost universally venerated, nay beloved, and not for

himself alone? It seemed but natural that, on the death of the fifteenth Earl of Moray, he and none other should be chosen to succeed to the honour of annually seconding the election of the Moderator of the General Assembly. Like Lord Moray he generally graced the occasion by appearing in the uniform of the Lieutenancy, adding, as was often remarked in the press, "the only bright note of colour to the ceremonial of the day". It may be said in passing that the uniform was set off by his Lordship's figure infinitely better than it had been by that of his noble predecessor, who, though of so ancient a line, was a small man with bandy legs. Lord Overtoun, on the contrary, despite a lineage that was unaffectedly middle-class, had what may be described (and frequently in his case was described) as an aristocratic appearance. Fairly tall, with straight legs and an almost soldierly bearing (he had been an officer in the Volunteers), he wore a reserved, even a careful, composure of expression upon his well-chiselled features. He was one of the general trustees of the United Free Church, and as such his name appeared as the principal defender in the celebrated case of the *General Assembly of the Free Church v. Overtoun and Others*. Into the details of that celebrated litigation it is unnecessary here to enter. Suffice it to say that no one more than his Lordship deplored and condemned the fantastic interpretation of the law of trusts by which the House of

Lords, reversing the unanimous and better-informed opinion of the Scottish Courts, stripped the United Free Church of its possessions. As is well known, the injustice was remedied by Parliament by means of the Scottish Churches Act, in the passing of which Lord Overtoun rendered valuable assistance in his place in the Upper House. During the crisis his Lordship headed the Church's Emergency Fund with the truly magnificent subscription of £10,000, and this generosity was repeated only a few days before his lamented decease in connection with an appeal on behalf of dispossessed ministers and congregations in the Highlands. The Church was indeed the poorer by his death, for his testamentary donations, large as they were, did not at all represent the capitalised value of his annual donations, and so were bound, in the nature of things, to cause disappointment. Alas! How truly may it be said of the passing of the rich and great, *Pereunt et imputantur*.

But Lord Overtoun's generosity was far from being confined within the limits of denominational benefactions. Every organisation that had for its aim the promotion of evangelical Christianity (so long as it was an organisation) had in him a warm friend. He was the financial backbone of the handsome pile of masonry known as the Christian Institute, which is the headquarters of the Glasgow United Evangelical Association, etc. etc., and of its annexes, the Y.M.C.A. Club and

the Bible Training Institute, the latter institution being the joint gift of himself and his sister for the purpose of training young men and women as lay evangelists. By his princely munificence he obtained a commanding interest in most of the West of Scotland hospitals and homes. Indeed it may be said that the name of the religious and philanthropic bodies with which he was associated was legion. Besides being president of the Glasgow United Evangelistic Association, the Bible Training Institute and the Glasgow Medical Missionary Society, he was a vice-president of the National Bible Society, the Colportage Society, the Boys' Brigade, the Glasgow Royal Samaritan Hospital for Women, the City of Glasgow Native Benevolent Society, the Glasgow Royal Hospital for Sick Children, the Scottish National Hospital for Imbecile Children, etc. etc. As may readily be imagined, amid these multifarious activities his Lordship found it well-nigh, if not wholly, impossible to play the more private part of an individual gentleman, and indeed, so far as we have been able to gain information, from obituary notices of his Lordship and other sources, he was practically unknown in this capacity. No doubt it was one of the many sacrifices made by him upon the altar of his faith.

Personally a total abstainer, Lord Overtoun was an ardent advocate of the temperance cause. As a young man he had been associated with evangelistic and charitable effort among the slum

dwellers of Glasgow, and the harrowing sights he then witnessed convinced him that the Drink Traffic was the root of all the social evils of the day, besides being a grave economic burden upon the nation in a time of increasing competition for the markets of the world. As a justice of the peace for Dumbarton he took an active part in the affairs of the Licensing Court, where his vote and influence were always on the side of temperance, though he never allowed preconceived opinions to weigh with him to the complete exclusion of his official responsibility. Sabbath observance was another social question on which his Lordship felt strongly. In common with the best minds in Scotland he deeply deplored the growing tendency to encroach upon the sacredness of the Day of Rest, and took a prominent part in the opposition to the introduction of a Sunday tramway service in Glasgow. In this respect Lord Overtoun's attitude was misunderstood in some quarters. It was represented as unreasonable that anyone who was himself no inconsiderable employer of Sunday labour, and who thought it no sin to ride in his carriage on the Sabbath, should object to persons in less affluent circumstances riding in a tramcar. Those who argued thus failed, of course, to appreciate the clear distinction that underlay Lord Overtoun's point of view. He was no bigoted Sabbatarian where he himself was concerned. As the head of a great industrial undertaking he was fully

conscious that a considerable amount of Sunday labour is one of the inexorable demands of economic law, and as a successful business man he had certain legitimate private indulgences. On the other hand, a line must be drawn between such things and a public utility carried on for profit in the eyes of all men upon the Lord's Day. To countenance such a proceeding was to declare oneself as willing to barter the Scottish Sabbath with all its sanctified traditions and its beautiful quietude for the Continental Sunday, and against this his Lordship would set his face like a flint. The reasoning here must be so obvious to the intelligent reader that it calls for no further elaboration.

A staunch supporter of the Liberal party, Mr. Campbell White (as he still then was) loyally followed Mr. Gladstone on the Home Rule question. In so doing he had to part company with many old political friends, but his mind on the subject was quite clear, and to the last he remained convinced that the only solution to the Irish question was to give the people of Ireland the fullest measure of self-government compatible with the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. So far from being influenced by the cry that Home Rule would mean Rome Rule, he inclined to the view that a generous measure of Home Rule would be the first step towards the emancipation of the Irish people from the tyranny of superstition and a potent aid to the spread of evangelical

truth in the distressful country. With his unfailing response to the appeal of any good cause he was a handsome contributor to the Liberal party war-chest, and when in 1893, during Mr. Gladstone's last administration, he was elevated to the peerage, it was universally recognised that never had an honour of the kind been more worthily bestowed. With the clearness of conscience and the simplicity that always characterised him he chose as the motto for his escutcheon the single word "Virtute", meaning "by virtue".

Lord Overtoun was not destined to be a prominent figure in the House of Lords, but it was noticeable that in the last few years he began to participate actively more in political affairs, following the dramatic revival of the fortunes of the Liberal party that set in at the General Election of 1906. At that election his nephew, Dr. J. Dundas White (now a well-known member of the Labour party), captured Dumbartonshire from the Unionists. As a thank-offering for this, one of the most notable Liberal victories in Scotland, his Lordship sent a cheque for £5000 to the Town Council of Clydebank for the avowed purpose of purchasing a public park for the great ship-building burgh.

In local affairs Lord Overtoun gave lavishly of his time and money. In 1890 he was elected to the Dumbarton County Council, and on the resignation of his uncle, Mr. Mackenzie of Caldarvan,

he was unanimously chosen convener, a position he held to the last. A Deputy Lieutenant for Dumbartonshire since 1884, on the death of Sir James Colquhoun of Luss, 5th baronet, in 1907, he was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of the county. For the new duties imposed on the Lieutenancy by Mr. (now Viscount) Haldane's Territorial Army scheme he was peculiarly well fitted by reason of his former connection with the Volunteers, and though opposed to militarism he was always a keen advocate of the physical training of the nation's manhood. In the burgh of Dumbarton, to which Overtoun is adjacent, his Lordship took a special interest. The College Park on which has been erected the truly monumental municipal buildings, was one of his many valuable gifts to the town. But, as we have seen, his charity was very far from being restricted to local objects. Appeals for help poured in upon him in a daily torrent from all quarters. To all he gave personal attention and judged each claim with that shrewdness and painstaking which characterised him in other walks of life. In all he did and gave he felt his personal responsibility. What he spent in private charity will never be known.

No man, however successful or generous, can expect to escape criticism, and in Lord Overtoun's case the outstanding position he occupied in Church and State made him an inevitable target for certain others of his countrymen who

had been less fortunate or less deserving in their lives. A number of damaging accusations were collected with careful ill-will by the late Mr. Keir Hardie and other agitators of the Labour party, and the collection culminated in 1899 in an attack which caused his Lordship and his Lordship's friends great distress. His Lordship, indeed, was deeply shocked, as were his friends. Not the least part of their distress was undoubtedly due to the extreme publicity achieved by the agitators, so that the affair became a matter for urgent discussion and comment throughout all Scotland. In the April of that year a strike—fomented in all probability by the aforesaid malcontents—occurred at Shawfield chemical works, and the cause of the strikers was taken up in the columns of the *Labour Leader*. Pandering to the public appetite for sensationalism, Mr. Keir Hardie published and afterwards reprinted in convenient pamphlet form a series of articles on the conditions of labour at Shawfield. It was therein alleged—

1. That Lord Overtoun's employees were paid at the rate of 3d. to 4d. (threepence to fourpence) per hour.
2. That they worked twelve hours a day, with no time off for meals.
3. That many of them also worked seven days per week.
4. That the manufacture of chrome was exceedingly deleterious to health, workers

contracting abscesses which were familiarly known as "chrome holes".

5. That sanitary conditions at the works were well-nigh as bad as they could be, and that it was even doubtful if the Factory Acts were being complied with.

These disclosures created a most painful impression, the more so in that they were apparently true in the main and therefore could elicit no substantial and categorical denial from Lord Overtoun. His Lordship was accordingly compelled to suffer for the most part in silence, which he did. At the same time it was with justice recognised by the majority of his fellow-countrymen, who displayed a notable exercise of charity upon the trying occasion, that Keir Hardie and his associates were animated less by a desire to benefit the Shawfield workers than by eagerness to calumniate one who deservedly stood high in the esteem of his fellow-citizens. Isaiah has said that in the sight of God all our righteousness is as filthy rags, but to the better and more respectable kind of person the public human display of a man's righteousness in this light, when undertaken by another man, amounts to a piece of uncalled-for malice. The unscrupulous character of the attack may be judged by the fact that one of the "eye-opener" pamphlets, as they were styled, contained a grossly objectionable and wholly irrelevant personal reference to a minister who

had publicly protested against the *Labour Leader's* aspersions on Lord Overtoun. An interdict against the circulation of the pamphlet was therefore obtained from the Courts. Unluckily it was a simple matter for the Labour party to reissue the self-same pamphlet with the offending passage removed. As his Lordship did not see his way to denying the accusations, his friends were unable to take the necessary steps for their suppression. As has already been said, Lord Overtoun maintained a dignified reticence in the face of the malicious campaign. He took occasion merely to point out that he had no personal knowledge of the matters in question, as, owing to the heavy demands of his religious and public activities and his absorption in the commercial side of the business, he had not for many years taken any part in the management of Shawfield works, and this apparently even when a strike of workers was in progress. It was characteristic, however, of his lordship's energy and judgment, that once his attention was publicly directed to the state of matters, no time was lost in effecting improved conditions at Shawfield in regard to wages, hours, Sunday labour and the health of the employees, and it is impossible to acquit the Labour party of unworthy, even mischievous motives, when one reflects that the same results might have been secured without either scandal or offence by means of a courteous and private communication to his Lordship.

Happily, the outbreak just then of the South African War diverted public attention from Shawfield, and the regrettable affair was soon forgotten in that wider field of interest. During the War Lord Overtoun, though he had felt grave misgiving at the course of policy adopted by Lord (or Sir Alfred, as he then was) Milner, which he regarded as calculated to provoke a conflict that was probably inevitable, warmly seconded every patriotic effort. In this connection it was noted as a remarkable coincidence that the same issue of the newspapers which announced the passing away of the great Christian philanthropist contained the news that his former traducer, Mr. Keir Hardie, had arrived at Johannesburg and had been obliged to obtain police protection owing to showers of rotten eggs, tomatoes and other vegetable missiles directed against his person by the loyal inhabitants of the Gold Reef city, who thus evinced their very natural abhorrence of the Labour leader's unpatriotic conduct during the time of the Empire's need.

As a mark of respect to his Lordship's memory the day of his funeral was made an occasion of public mourning in the burgh of Dumbarton, all work being suspended during the progress of the obsequies. The late peer having been (as above stated) Lord-Lieutenant of the county, the funeral was of a semi-military character. A procession fully half a mile long, in which members of all

Presbyterian denominations were represented, followed the body to its last resting-place in Dumbarton Cemetery, where a short service was conducted by the Rev. John MacNeil (the celebrated evangelistic preacher, who had long been one of Lord Overtoun's protégés, and whose humorous sallies from the pulpit had made him famous throughout Scotland), and a firing-party of the 1st Dumbarton Artillery Volunteers discharged three volleys over the grave.

By his will Lord Overtoun left £23,000 to the various schemes of the United Free Church, £12,500 to the Glasgow infirmaries, £11,000 to the Glasgow Evangelistic Association, £2000 to the National Bible Society and a large number of smaller bequests to other benevolent objects, totalling in all £63,000 in the cause of charity alone.

Friends, be frank ! Ye snuff
 Civet, I warrant. Really ? Like enough !
 Merely the savor's rareness ; any nose
 May ravage with impunity a rose ;
 Rifle a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours !
 I'd tell you that same pungency ensures
 An after-gust, but that were overbold.
 Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

“CLAUDIUS CLEAR”

THE Disruption of the Kirk in 1843 was even more successful than its leaders had dared to hope for. There was no parish that did not yield at least the nucleus of a Free Church congregation. In some parishes ministers and congregations seceded, in many ministers were left without congregations or congregations without ministers. There were even presbyteries that seceded *en bloc*. The only considerable black spot from the Free Church point of view was Aberdeenshire, which had long been notorious for its “moderatism” and where even the evangelicals shrank from pushing their principles to the point of secession. Thus in the little Donside presbytery of Alford few of the people “came out” and none of the ministers. Disruption policy, however, required that a Free Church presbytery of Alford should be set up without delay and that the little handful of the faithful in each parish should have the status of a full pastoral charge. To make up the complement of ministers, two schoolmasters were ordained—Dr. Pirie Smith, who became minister

of Keig, and the Rev. Harry Nicoll, who was settled in his native village of Lumsden as minister of Auchindoir. Both of these ex-dominies married into the Clan Robertson,¹ and the eldest son in each case was christened William Robertson. The parallel goes no further. The two worthy men were as unlike in character as their distinguished sons after them proved to be.

The Nicoll family history is interesting as illustrating the capriciousness of Scottish sectarian divisions. The erratic path of the line that separates Presbyterian from Presbyterian is notorious ; it is not so well understood that at one time there was the same uncertainty about the dividing line between Presbyterian and Episcopalian. The Nicolls were pure-bred Highlanders. Harry Nicoll's great-grandfather had been “out” in the 'Forty-five and had fought at Culloden. Naturally the old rebel was an Episcopalian, and one at least of his grandsons, a wheelwright who plied his trade at the village of Monymusk, carried on the Episcopalian tradition of the family. This wheelwright had a clever son, Alexander Nicoll (1793-1828), who went from Aberdeen University to Balliol as a Snell exhibitioner, took orders in the Church of England, and at the age of twenty-nine became Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford and a canon of Christ Church.

¹ Robertson blood seems to make for intellectual ability. Gladstone and Rainy both came of the Robertsons of Kindeace. Mrs. Nicoll was one of the Robertsons of Struan, the branch to which Robertson of Brighton belonged.

But Harry Nicoll's father, a younger brother of the wheelwright, who was a small farmer at Lumsden, deserted the old faith and conformed to the Kirk. Harry was brought up in the Moderate school of Presbyterianism, but somehow—the circumstances are unknown—came to profess Evangelical opinions while a student at Aberdeen. He became parish schoolmaster at Auchindoir and a licentiate of the Kirk. At the Disruption he resigned his schoolmastership and threw in his lot with the Free Church. It is no reflection on his sincerity to suggest that his decision was influenced by his ambition to exchange his desk for a pulpit, which he had no prospect of realising if he remained in the Establishment.

A Scottish country parson has fewer opportunities for cultivating eccentricity than his English brother. His ecclesiastical discipline sees to that. But within the permitted limits old Harry Nicoll was certainly a queer fish. He was taciturn and passionless—strange qualities in a Highlander. Twice each Sunday he would edify his flock with austere expositions of orthodox evangelical doctrine. He had a formidable theory of preaching which put a strict ban on anecdotes, poetical quotations, the first personal pronoun, perorations and everything that savoured of an emotional appeal. He was at great pains to make his sermons conform to his ideal. Out of the pulpit he never spoke of religion even to his

own family, though he might express an academic opinion on a theological question. But generally he seems to have regarded talking of any kind as a waste of precious time that ought to be devoted to reading. For Harry Nicoll loved books with a passion that in the case of a less respectable object would have been regarded as wicked, or even insane. In order to gratify it he starved himself. That was a small matter, for he was a man of tough constitution. The wicked thing was that he also starved his young wife and family. Poor Mrs. Nicoll! Her husband's wedding gift to her had been an Italian edition of Ariosto. When after a few years of bookish married life she lay on her death-bed, he was unremitting in his solicitude for her comfort and read Madame Guyon to her for hours every day. When she died he bowed quietly to the will of Heaven and consoled himself by buying more books than ever. At his death in 1891, in his eightieth year, his library consisted of 17,000 volumes, for which his wife and three of the five children she bore him had paid with their lives, and his two surviving children had contributed their share in broken health.

An idyllic presentment of the old bookworm has been given by his son in *My Father*, which is perhaps the cleverest thing Robertson Nicoll ever wrote. It was produced as a counterblast to Mr. Gosse's *Father and Son*, and journalistic acumen combined happily with filial piety to

falsify the record. It is quite true that the old manse at Lumsden was free from the nightmare fanaticism that brooded over the Gosse household. No bookworm was ever a bigot, and Mr. Nicoll's strict evangelical orthodoxy seems to have coexisted with a deep-seated scepticism. His children had to perform their proper Sunday tasks, but of direct religious instruction from their father they had none. The conventional rule that only religious books were permissible on Sunday was liberally interpreted so as to include Renan, Strauss, Colenso and other respectable rationalists, whom the old gentleman did by no means abhor. No book in the wonderful library was forbidden to the children, and equally no book was ever prescribed for reading except *The Arabian Nights*, *Don Quixote* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which Mr. Nicoll highly esteemed as providing the infant mind with the best basis for its literary education.

All this was very well, but little children cannot be nourished and made happy on books and broadmindedness. Mrs. Nicoll left four living, the eldest only seven years old. Looking back on the life at the manse Robertson Nicoll, when he was not writing for publication, confessed that their father's devouring selfishness made their childhood thoroughly miserable. They were by inheritance delicate children. They were not properly fed. The only care they received was from the overburdened hands

of an old Highland servant of all work, whose kitchen was their only refuge in the long winter evenings. For though the manse was small—not much more than a superior cottage—three apartments in addition to the study were appropriated by the monstrous, cancerous growth of printed matter that covered every wall from floor to ceiling, and filled great double bookcases through the middle of each room. And, though not at all harsh, Mr. Nicoll was the reverse of an amiable man. His reticence was chilling, and when engaged on his interminable studies he was extremely irritable and sensitive to noise. The children’s play must ever be hushed lest their father be disturbed in the all-important task of converting himself into a walking encyclopædia that nobody would ever consult. As they grew older the children developed a natural sense of grievance. There was no actual rebellion, only a bitter resentment at the old man’s callous egoism which they carried with them all their days. “I always feel”, said Robertson Nicoll when a man of fifty, “that I was defrauded of my youth—there was so little sunshine in it—far too little.”

But William Robertson Nicoll was his father’s son. Nobody who has been brought up among books, however much he may have had to suffer for the privilege, can ever be anything but bookish. William acquired from his father the art of reading, enormously, rapidly and retentively,

and, like his father, he always felt, as Sir James Barrie has put it, that the next best thing to a good book is a bad book. Where he differed from his father and raised the flag of rebellion was that at an early age he made up his mind that the first object in reading a good book and the only object in reading a bad one is to convert them both into hard cash. After a preparatory year at Aberdeen Grammar School he matriculated at Aberdeen University at the tender age of fifteen, and led the meagre life of the Scottish student of the old days. A bursary of £11 a year paid his fees, and 10s. a week found him in bed and board. He bore his poverty stoically, but it is to his credit that he never pretended that he liked it or got any benefit from it. He was not a distinguished student. Although he had a poor purse and a weak chest, the sentimental rôle of the "lad o' pairts" did not appeal to him in the least. He worked no more at classics, mathematics and philosophy than on a close calculation was strictly necessary for his degree. But he was not idle. It was remarked with disapproval that he spent hours every day in the Corn Exchange Reading Room, perusing with care the current numbers of newspapers and reviews, and making exhaustive researches into the bound volumes. There was nothing random about these studies. The lad wanted money, and his only means of getting it was his pen.

Being an Aberdonian and a realist he had no high notions about literature as a livelihood, and none of that innocent conceit of most young men with literary ambitions, who, like George Primrose, think they have nothing to do but sit down and “dress up three paradoxes with some ingenuity”. With a hard sagacity far beyond his years he saw clearly (how few of us do!) that periodical literature is a commodity like soap or cotton piece-goods, and that if you don’t know the market you are not likely to sell much. Market conditions, as he summed them up from his study of the press, were these. There was no demand whatsoever for anything that with propriety could be described as thought. (This was a great comfort, for thinking takes time, and in journalism more than in anything else time is money.) On the other hand, there was a very substantial demand for palatable and predigested information. Willie Nicoll, though only in his teens, was confident that he could deliver the goods, and he judged rightly. For, strange to say, old Harry Nicoll, who always took six months to review a book for the *Aberdeen Journal*, had taught his son not only how to read but how to write. “My father was a connoisseur in style, and used to talk much on the subject. He disliked high-flown writing such as that of Christopher North. . . . What he asked for in a writer was clearness, limpidity, short sentences. His favourite stylists were Hazlitt and Newman.”

Willie pondered these things in his heart. He invariably wrote short sentences that always seemed to be clear and limpid, even when they were not. The consequence was that when, at the age of nineteen, he entered upon his theological course at the Aberdeen Free Church College, he was already an experienced and successful journalist. It is true that his work was of a humble sort. The local press and one or two popular miscellanies of fact and fiction published from Dundee made up his market. The pay was poor, very poor, but our Willie's motto was small profits and quick returns. When he sat down in his humble lodging to write an article or a "poem"—for, alas! he could rhyme—he always did so with the assurance that he would sell it. In the days of his greatness he could boast that since he first put pen to paper he had never had but one article and one poem rejected. During his four years at the theological college his *clientèle* increased. He joined the regular staff of the *Aberdeen Journal*, to which he contributed, among other matter, a weekly column on things in general over the appropriate signature of "Quid Nunc". He wrote for the *Scotsman*, the *Literary World*, *Once a Week* and *Chamber's Journal*, which was then under the editorship of James Payn. (Nicoll always retained a strong regard for Payn, and wrote a very approving "Claudius Clear" letter about him when he died.) In addition, he found time to

lecture on English literature at a young ladies' academy, and was always willing to act as private tutor to anybody who would pay him a shilling an hour. In this way he did more than support himself. When he passed out of the college in the spring of 1874 he had £200 in the bank. Unlike most “probationers” he had not long to wait for a church. Within a few weeks he had received calls from Dufftown and Rhynie. He elected for Dufftown and was ordained in the following November, being then twenty-three years of age. Barely three years later he was translated to Kelso, one of the most desirable Free Church charges in the south of Scotland.

Nicoll's rapid initial success in the Church was due to the same sagacity that had already enabled him to win many a guinea by his pen and was later to make him a commanding figure in British journalism. He could always crowd the pews just as he could always sell an article. To him the preacher's problem and the journalist's were substantially the same—to find a market and develop it. This, he noted, was not to be done by cheap-jack displays of pulpiteering. Picking up business off the street is not marketing. Robertson Nicoll had nothing but contempt for “popular” preachers. His methods were subtler. He started with the advantage of having a multitude of interests and no enthusiasms—not even the enthusiasm of youth. Unlike most of his fellow-students he was perfectly

immune from the effects of the new theological wine that Robertson Smith had brought from Germany. He drank it all in with a just appreciation of its flavour, but it did not fire his blood. For Robertson Smith personally he never seems to have had much liking, and was one of the few young ministers who voted for his deprivation. Smith never forgave him. They had known each other from childhood, and Smith felt that "auld lang syne" at least should have ensured him Nicoll's support. But—dating back it may be to those very days of childhood—there was on the part of Nicoll some secret antipathy which all his life rendered him unable to refer to Robertson Smith without a hint of depreciation. It would be a mistake to stress the personal equation, for in any case the things Robertson Smith stood for never counted high in the Nicoll scale of values. He had a marvellous eye for appraising a religious creed and its quality as a going human concern. In this respect he found liberal theology wanting. It might invoke the sacred name of Truth, but what is Truth? And in any case, what is there to show that people are interested in it? He had no prejudice against liberal theology, neither had he any illusions about it. It did not in his judgment contain the elements that make for really successful preaching, whereas orthodoxy did.

Now beware of misjudging him. His was not the cynical choice of the thing that pays. There

was never anything of the cynic about Robertson Nicoll. Fond of money as he was—and not even his most devoted friends would deny him that weakness—he would never preach or write anything that he did not after a fashion believe. One rather hesitates to describe him as a religious man, for that suggests too much; but he knew what religion was, and he certainly had a theology—a version of Puritan mysticism about which he was capable of writing cantankerous letters to any clerical friend who said he could not understand it. Hence his curious partiality for small, old and narrow Puritan sects, which first manifested itself in his earlier student days at Aberdeen. The good woman with whom he lodged belonged to the Original Secession body,¹ and with her he worshipped rather than with his own denomination. The habit persisted even in the sophisticated “Claudius Clear”, whose favourite Sunday recreation was attendance at Particular Baptist chapels. If his attitude towards old-world orthodoxy was not exactly faith, it was at least one of genuine æsthetic appreciation which did almost as well; and the eye of the connoisseur is not the less loving for being sensible of market values. The moment at which he passed out of the college was opportune for displaying his practical insight. In 1874 Scotland was in the throes of the Moody and Sankey revival. It does not appear that Nicoll was much impressed by Moody’s preach-

¹ This remnant of the “Auld Licht Anti-Burghers” still exists.

ing, and certainly Moody's theology was not of a kind to appeal to him. But there was the broad fact of the religious quickening which no preacher who knew his business could think of ignoring. The question was how best to recognise it. Ordinary men answered it by ineffective imitations of Moody. Not so Nicoll. He had noted that by far the most consistently effective exponent of evangelical orthodoxy of the day was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and accordingly, on taking up his first pastoral employment as *locum tenens* in a country parish, he made an intensive study of Spurgeon's sermons. The gratifying result was that within two or three months congregations were competing to secure his services. The soundness of his method was proved by the unbroken success of the eleven years of his ministry.

Nicoll's clerical life was closed abruptly by the break-down of his health in 1885, when he began to show signs of the malady that had already carried off his mother, his sister and his brother.¹ He resigned his charge at Kelso and went to live at Dawlish. There he began to mend, but the medical verdict was that he must never on any account resume preaching. Thenceforward his energies must be content with the pen for an outlet. To another man this would have been a sad blow, but in Nicoll's case it was

¹ Henry Nicoll, editor of the *Aberdeen Evening Gazette*, died at his brother's manse at Kelso, January 29, 1885, aged twenty-seven.

merely the anticipation of a decision that would have been forced upon him sooner or later. For during the years of his pastorate the activity and scope of his pen had steadily increased. Shortly after settling at Kelso he became reader to an Edinburgh firm of publishers, Messrs. Macniven and Wallace, for whom he projected and edited a very successful series entitled the *Household Library of Exposition*. He also persuaded Messrs. Sonnenschein to start under his editorship a homiletic monthly called the *Contemporary Pulpit*. He wrote several books, including a *Life of Christ*, which was and still is a best seller of its kind, and a really meritorious life of Tennyson. During one of his visits to Edinburgh he met Mr. Hodder of Hodder and Stoughton, and lost no time in propounding a scheme for a series to be entitled the *Clerical Library*. It was a good scheme. Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton adopted it and Nicoll carried it through. Next Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton made him editor of *The Expositor*, which he continued to conduct as a beloved parergon for the rest of his life.

Dawlish, where he recovered some of his health, settled Robertson Nicoll's fate, and incidentally, when one thinks of the political influence, overt and secret, that he subsequently attained, it settled some at least of the fate of the British Empire a generation later. He was in close touch with Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, who at the moment had the idea of taking over the

old *British Quarterly Review*, discarding its specifically Congregationalist character and converting it into a general Nonconformist monthly with Nicoll as editor. When that plan failed, Nicoll at once submitted an idea of his own for a Nonconformist weekly on entirely new lines. After due consideration Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton decided to risk it. The venture involved a good deal of money, but their experience of Nicoll was an assurance of success. The assurance was made doubly sure by the fact that the hard-bitten Aberdonian undertook to work without salary until the paper began to pay.

All the same the *British Weekly* project as finally settled was a severe test of faith. For though Nicoll agreed to work for nothing, he exacted his price, which was that he should have an absolutely free hand in the conduct of the paper. And that was a heavy price for any honest merchant adventurers in the publishing line to be required to pay. Though he had shown remarkable aptitude for journalism, Nicoll had never been more than a half-timer. He was only thirty-five years of age. He was a chronic invalid, who had to do a large part of his work in bed. He was a Scotsman whose total residence in England was reckoned in weeks, and he had a full share of the Presbyterian Scot's antipathy to English Nonconformity. "If I had to stay here", he wrote from Dawlish, "I should be forced to go to the English Church. No

educated man could stand the Dissenters.” His political opinions were equally unfortunate. He professed to be a Liberal, but he was bitterly opposed to Home Rule. He detested Gladstone and adored Chamberlain. Such was the man who, in 1886, proposed to edit a popular weekly that should be an organ of Nonconformity and Gladstonian Liberalism.

The *British Weekly* did pay. Its success, not merely in circulation and profits but in material influence, has established Robertson Nicoll with Alfred Harmsworth and W. T. Stead as one of the three great journalists of the closing nineteenth century. He had not the imperial genius of Harmsworth for exploitation that knew no tradition, no law, no morality but its own. He had neither the invention nor the picturesqueness of Stead, still less had he Stead’s disconcerting moral fervour. But he had more humanity than Harmsworth, more sagacity than Stead, and far more culture than both of them put together. Harmsworth built his great enterprise upon a very simple piece of observation, viz. that owing to the Education Act of 1872 a large proportion of the adult population of London in the ’nineties were able to read ordinary words of two or even three syllables, that in due course the whole adult population would be in the same happy condition, and that in the meantime this educated democracy had nothing to practise its reading on. Nicoll, when he started the *British Weekly*

a decade earlier than the *Daily Mail*, noted a similar but less depressing fact. The icy Puritanism that bound Nonconformity was beginning to break up. The effects of the removal of the civil disabilities of Dissenters were becoming manifest. Chapel folk were beginning to look about and take an interest in things and even ideas. They were tenacious of their old beliefs and prejudices, yet they wanted to be told, decently and in a way they could understand, something of the general intellectual life of the time. Being human they could be impressed by the "stunt". That noble journalistic device had just been invented by Stead, and Nicoll was quick to appreciate its value—indeed, if Stead had not invented it he would have invented it. At any rate he started the *British Weekly* on one, a religious census of London which excited a gratifying amount of lively discussion. This he followed up by having each week an article by a "big name", but he did not continue it long. His eye was never off the weekly returns, and he marked and inwardly digested the fact that the circulation of the paper, so far from rising, actually dropped 200 in the week he published an article by R. L. Stevenson. Thenceforward he knew the limitations of the "stunt" as well as its value. As to big names, the *British Weekly* would in future have none but those the editor made big, with his own as the biggest of all.

Dr. Darlow, whose opinion is entitled to the

greatest respect, has said that for all his knowledge and insight Robertson Nicoll never really understood the Nonconformists. This is quite true if understanding be assumed to include sympathy and instinctive liking, of which Nicoll assuredly had none. “No educated man could stand the Dissenters.” That casual remark, made when he first came to live in England, revealed an attitude that could never be changed, however skilfully it might be disguised. For, with the best will in the world, no Presbyterian Scot—and Nicoll was a thorough Scot and a Presbyterian in grain—can ever bring himself to feel kindly towards an English Dissenter. There are several reasons for this, but in the main it is the dissidence of English Dissent that repels him, its apparent defiance of the national *Kultur*, a reproach that, in spite of bitter feuds and secessions, can never be cast up against Scottish Presbyterianism. Nevertheless, under the benign influence of the aphorism that “business is business”, Robertson Nicoll soon learned to be tolerant of what he did not like, and even if he could not achieve sympathy it cannot be said that he lacked an understanding of his Nonconformist public sufficient for all the practical purposes he had in mind. And on the whole it is to the advantage of him who drives fat oxen that he should not himself be fat. There is a most revealing letter written before the *British Weekly* was a month old.

“It is a great mistake of W. ”, he writes, “to think that he has nothing to learn from Spurgeon. And that attitude makes Spurgeon angry and alienated. We cannot overlook facts—and the fact is that the Spurgeonic type of preaching is the only kind that moves the democracy. I know there are very repulsive elements about all that set of people. But I know, and so do you, that they are the salt of the earth. My great desire is to treat them with sympathy and respect, and so be able to teach them by degrees more charitable views.”

The quality of the writer's sympathy is distinctly strained, but his understanding is acute enough.

For a year this frail creature with his broken lung carried on the *British Weekly* single-handed. He was his own staff and his own chief and by far most trusted contributor. It was only when success was assured that he accepted the luxury of an assistant editor. Yet, while the paper always bore the mark of a single directing and informing personality, it never had the shabby-genteel appearance of the one-man journalistic show. It was an achievement worthy of rank with La Tour d'Auvergne's exploit, though it did not always excite the same unmixed admiration. For as time went on and Nicoll's pen invaded other journals than his own, the idea got about that there was some sinister purpose behind all this activity. Andrew Lang (who

should certainly have been the last person to cast a stone) broke into satirical triolets in the *Morning Post*, and Conan Doyle in the *Daily Chronicle* accused Nicoll of being the head of a vast log-rolling industry. The culprit was not perturbed. “One has vexatious things,” he once wrote to a friend early in his career, “but I do not get into tempers as a rule; it is so exhausting. No; the secret of tranquillity is ‘adopt the recumbent position’.” To Conan Doyle’s choler he replied mildly that he reviewed books because it was an agreeable way of making a little money. And he added with a sly humility: “I have no doubt that Dr. Doyle has received more for one novel than I have ever received for all the criticisms I have ever written. *Non equidem invideo: miror magis.*” Probably he was over-modest about his profits. In his later years, at any rate, Robertson Nicoll could and did command very large prices. But it was strictly true that he never had any more sinister object in writing than to get paid for what he wrote.

As an editor Nicoll has been credited with being a great discoverer of literary talent, and there is no doubt that he liked to be thought of as one who could make reputations at will. But his success in that way, though considerable, has been exaggerated chiefly owing to the skill with which he exploited that travesty of Scottish character known as the “Kailyard School”.

But he did not discover Barrie—Frederick Greenwood has that honour—and he did not discover Crockett, though he was quick to appropriate them both to his own purposes. The only member of the Kailyard trio that he did actually unearth was “Ian Maclaren”, and his manner of doing so was characteristic. The Rev. John Maclaren Watson, minister of Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, enjoyed a high reputation as a preacher. Nicoll asked him to contribute some articles to *The Expositor* and, never having met him, invited him to Hampstead to discuss the matter. First impressions were not favourable. “He stayed with us three nights”, Nicoll wrote to a friend, “and was very pleasant, but somehow I did not take to him as much as I expected; he was too cynical for me.” But the cynical fellow could tell a good sentimental story, and his host took to him enough to leave him no peace until he promised to write some articles on the same lines for the *British Weekly*. The result (after one or two false starts) was the profitable welter of sentiment known in book-form as *The Bonnie Brier Bush*. After that Nicoll ceased to have qualms about Watson’s cynicism. Other people may find it less easy to forgive Nicoll his charity.

The only other “discoveries” that can fairly be claimed for Robertson Nicoll were Hale White and Dr. R. J. Campbell. The former he did not exactly discover, but he saved him from

obscurity and raised him to something like a vogue, which was a work of merit. Whether “Mark Rutherford” deserves all the fine words that “Claudius Clear” has lavished on him is for later writers to determine. The interesting thing here is that “Mark Rutherford” evoked the nearest approach to a real enthusiasm that Nicoll ever betrayed. The case of Dr. Campbell was quite different. He was started frankly as a “stunt”, and when, after a short and dazzling run, he developed in ways undreamt of in the Nicoll philosophy there was a good deal of unpleasantness. For Nicoll was most intolerant in everything that touched the curious blend of theology and journalism that was his main business. The man who did not conform to his special canons in that regard might be used, but there was a private black mark registered against him that sooner or later would become effective, and which represented not only disapproval but personal distaste. Reference has already been made to Nicoll’s alienation from Robertson Smith. There were other able men in his own denomination towards whom he showed a like antipathy. For A. B. Bruce, a great scholar and a great Christian, he seldom had anything but a sneer. To T. M. Lindsay he was respectful but distant. Henry Drummond he utterly despised, though he was not above taking advantage of the popularity of *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. When planning the first number of the *British Weekly*

he asked Drummond for an article on the Irish question, yet with searchings of heart which he expressed in a letter to Dr. Marcus Dods : " To tell you the truth, I felt great compunction in asking his help, for I cannot believe that all that evangelising, banqueting, reconciling and philandering can ever be the material of a sincere and healthy life." And years afterwards, when Drummond was dead, he could say : " The book [Sir G. A. Smith's *Life of Drummond*] confirms what I never could help feeling—that Drummond was a charlatan, in the sense that he was always trying tasks far beyond him. . . . And how remarkably absent are any traces of serious reading and thought—even reading of any kind. He was as ill-read as a bishop." Uncharitable and supercilious judgments, no doubt, but not so very wide of the mark. Robertson Nicoll was seldom wide of the mark. Huckster he was, charlatan never, and it was with characteristic acumen that he defined the charlatan as one who attempts tasks beyond his power. His own aim was good because he remained always with perfect honesty within the limits of his endowment.

Nicoll developed several other journalistic enterprises beside the *British Weekly*—notably *The Bookman*, the first literary journal to realise the possibilities of the half-tone block—but by far the greatest engine of his influence was the " Correspondence of Claudius Clear " which he

started in the second year of the *British Weekly* and continued without a break until his death. As a journalistic *tour de force* one must simply applaud it: articulate praise would be an impertinence. “Claudius Clear” never said a single great thing—it is not the business of a journalist to say great things even if he could—but he was always saying good things, and his manner of saying them entitles him to rank as the perfect stylist of popular English journalism. His versatility was bewildering. He could write of a forgotten book picked out of the twopenny box like Mr. E. V. Lucas, of a cold in the head (Nicoll always had a cold) like Mr. Lynd, of a Puritan mystic like Dr. Alexander Whyte with authority, and in a manner all his own about any perfectly uninteresting acquaintance who had the misfortune to turn up in the obituary column of *The Times*. From time to time Nicoll published collections of these papers in book-form, and anyone who cares to turn to them even at this time of day will find them uncommonly good and fresh reading.

Upon the death of R. H. Hutton, who was one of his idols, “Claudius Clear” wrote: “Journalists often forget that they are writing for a baptized people, but the editors of the *Spectator* did not, and have had their reward.” The coolness of the observation rather takes one’s breath away, yet it was written without any sense of impropriety. Robertson Nicoll acted

upon it all his life, and he too had his reward. He had it to a greater degree than was ever deemed possible in Hutton's day. It took the form of hard cash in ample measure, academic honours, a knighthood, a Companionship of Honour, and—though he had no great interest in politics—an amazing amount of political influence, especially in the later stages of the Great War, when perplexed statesmen were glad to have his advice. It is said that nobody ever regretted having taken it.

Robertson Nicoll's temper when crossed was formidable, and he was capable of bitter and savage invective that made the boldest quail. There was a sinister streak in him, redeeming him always in the last resort from commonplaceness, and giving him his peculiar though never obvious quality. In the ordinary way of life he was the quiet almost timid man, apparently true to type, clumsy and uncouth in his habits, absorbed in his job, gentle in the domestic circle, beloved by his few friends. He was a good talker among his intimates, whom he chose from men of the world who could have no possible theological contacts with him. In general he was inclined to play up to the part of the Scotsman of English tradition—the broad-spoken, sentimental, Sabbath-observing, casuistical, contentious, industrious, “bang went saxpence” Scotsman, and it cannot be said that in so doing he did himself any injustice. He was that Scotsman.

“CLAUDIUS CLEAR”

But he was other things as well. He died at Hampstead on May 4, 1923, in his seventy-second year, the cleverest, shrewdest Scot of his generation,

. . . facetus
emunctae naris, durus componere versus :
nam fuit hoc vitiosus : in hora saepe ducentos,
ut magnum, versus dictabat stans pede in uno.

THE END

H 16172





